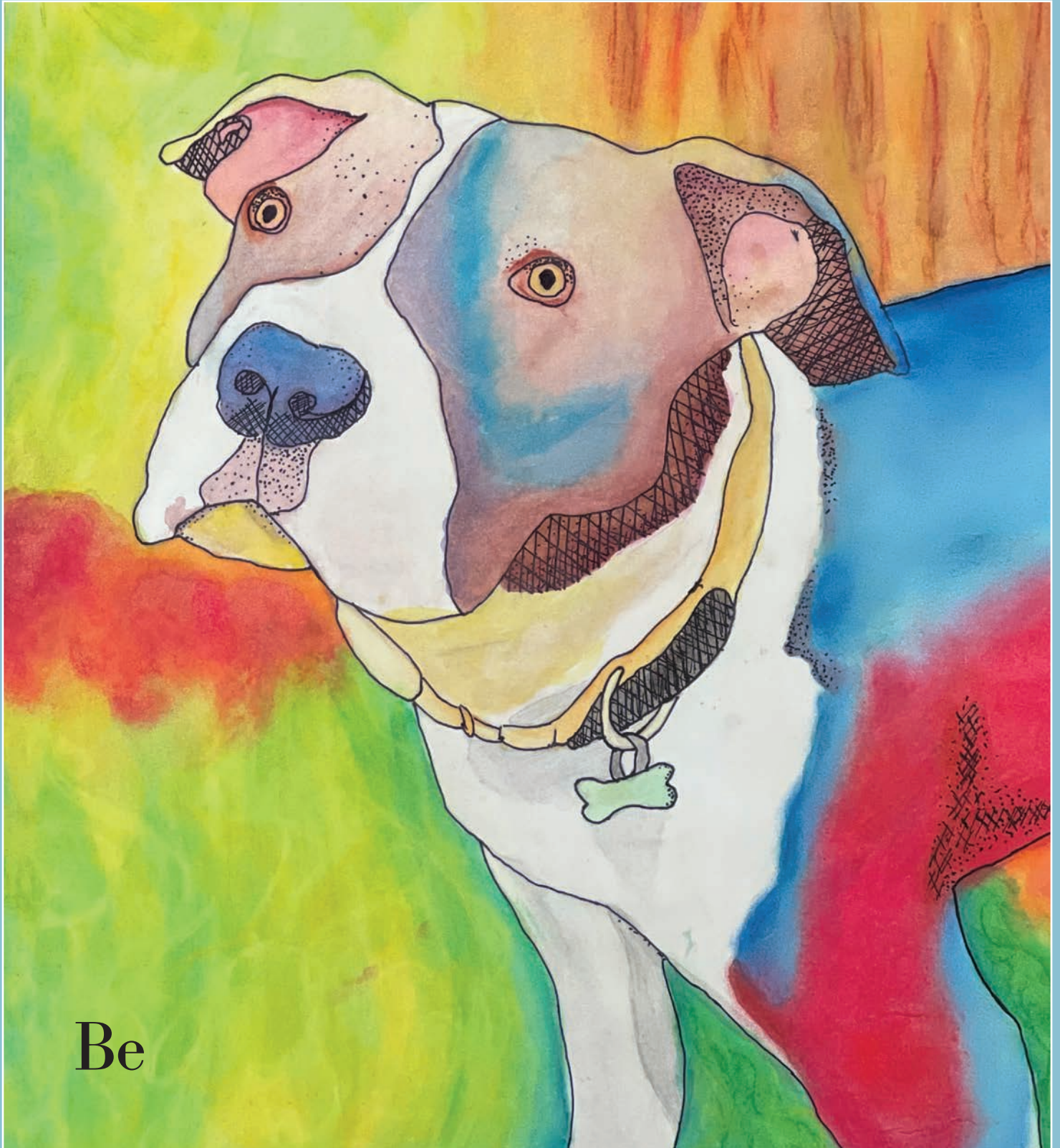


The Orff Echo

SUMMER 2024

VOLUME 56 NUMBER 4

QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN ORFF-SCHULWERK ASSOCIATION



Be

SOUND QUALITY MEETS INNOVATION



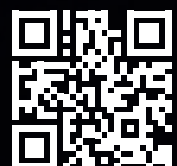
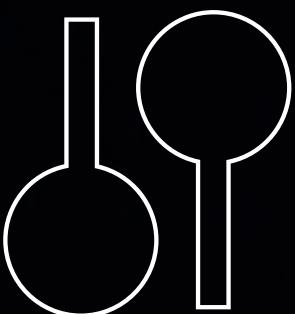
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The Orff Echo

SUMMER 2024
VOLUME 56 NUMBER 4

QUARTERLY JOURNAL
OF THE AMERICAN
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on the cover

"Colorful Curiosity" by Elizabeth Upton,
a student at Twin Creeks Middle School,
Spring, TX. Art teacher: Dorris Pauley

issue coordinators

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and Erika Knapp



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ethics statement

The American Orff-Schulwerk Association strongly encourages members to be positive and discreet when discussing our organization, specific courses and/or teachers, and the Orff Schulwerk approach. The very nature of the Orff Schulwerk philosophy embodies a broad spectrum of expressions, exploring different paths to arrive at artistic and educational goals. Members are encouraged to recognize and remain open to varied approaches and to celebrate both our differences and our similarities.

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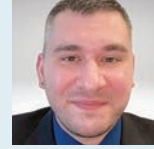
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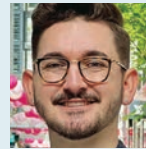
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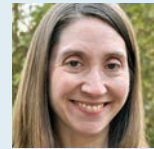
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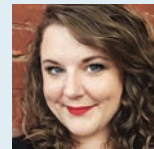
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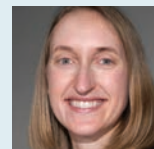
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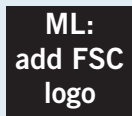
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mission statement

The American Orff-Schulwerk Association is a professional organization of educators dedicated to the creative music and movement approach developed by Carl Orff and Gunild Keetman.

Our mission is:

- to demonstrate the value of Orff Schulwerk and promote its widespread use;
- to support the professional development of our members; and
- to inspire and advocate for the creative potential of all learners.

AOSA diversity statement

AOSA is committed to supporting a diverse and inclusive membership, promoting an understanding of issues of diversity and inclusion, and providing teaching and learning resources and professional development that respects, affirms, and protects the dignity and worth of all.

our core values

As music and movement educators dedicated to the creative music and movement approach developed by Carl Orff and Gunild Keetman, we believe that:

- Every learner deserves the opportunity to actively create, improvise, sing, play, move, speak, and listen.
- Every learner should experience music and dance from cultures represented in both our diverse American society and the larger global community.
- Every learner deserves a passionate, committed music educator who values the importance of active music making.
- Every Orff Schulwerk educator deserves high-quality opportunities to improve their pedagogy and musicianship through active, collaborative professional development.
- Every Orff Schulwerk educator should cultivate the creative potential in all learners.
- Every AOSA member deserves opportunities to engage in open and constructive dialogue regarding the future and well-being of their chapter and the national organization.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Josh Southard

Communications that Connect: Summer 2024

They were *that* class. Every Tuesday and Thursday. At 1:50 p.m., they rounded the corner and walked down the main hallway of Waveland Elementary to the music room. Their teacher, Mr. Petry, led his Grade 6 class of 18 students towards me, stopping occasionally to turn around and give them that “You’re in the hall, quiet,” look, to which they

immediately responded. Every Tuesday and Thursday, I dreaded that time of day. And it had nothing to do with their behavior. They were smarter than me. They knew it. I knew it. They knew I knew it.

Let me give you some background on this story. The first school system I worked for was South Montgomery Schools in rural central Indiana. Southmont, as it is called, consisted of four kindergarten through Grade 6 elementary schools and one junior-senior high school. My week was divided between New Market Elementary, which had around 500 students at the time, and Waveland Elementary, whose student population was much smaller at 126 children. I was one of two



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A large graphic advertisement for 'Teaching With Orff'. It features a portrait of Carl Orff, an elderly man with glasses, resting his chin on his hands. The background is a vibrant red watercolor wash with musical notation (staves and notes) overlaid. The text 'no strings attached' is written in a handwritten style above the main text. The main text reads 'A free resource for Movement & Music Educators'. At the bottom left, it says 'Teaching With Orff' with the 'Orff' in a red speech bubble.

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music teachers at New Market, and we split the classes each year. Though our styles differed, the other music teacher and I worked well together. At Waveland, however, the kids were all mine. I started there in 2004, bringing in this “Orff thing,” with four barred instruments and some small percussion. I got permission, in one of those “ask for forgiveness later” moments, to take the New Market instruments to Waveland and vice versa in order to have close to a class set. Every day I loaded 20 instruments into the car, took them to the other school, unloaded them, and set up the room, all to do it again the next day. Thanks to a supportive superintendent, Dr. Lewis, and a school board member, Mr. Spencer, by the end of my second year I had a full set of instruments at both schools.

For three years, I pretended to know what I was doing. Seeing the kids twice a week for 40 minutes was huge in that I felt I was getting them, in half the time, to where I wanted them to be as far as curriculum and skills. My third winter program felt more like a program I wanted to present, and everything seemed to be falling into place. We had rhythmic speech, body percussion, instrumental pieces, and singing. My confidence as a teacher was increasing.

What happened during that final year at Waveland changed me and my teaching, and I will be forever grateful to those 18 students.

But then *that* class came. They had been my students since they were third graders, and they had always been an enjoyable class, with great attitudes, good humor, and the willingness to try anything I asked them to do. Now they were sixth graders. Now they ruled the school—and they made sure I knew it. The confidence I had going into that fourth year was all but dashed on the first day of class. What happened during that final year at Waveland changed me and my teaching, and I will be forever grateful to those 18 students.

When we talk about our career paths, we always mention the teachers that guided us along the way, the teachers that inspired us, taught us, mentored us. I am no different. I can list names all day of those who inspired me, who took me aside and talked curriculum, process, and next steps. We all know, however, that can get us only so far. We can

go into a classroom with all the knowledge, but we are on our own when it comes to the application. In reality, it is our students who make us the teachers we are. They are the ones who teach us how to teach.

So on the first day of school, Mr. Petry walked his sixth graders down the hall to the music room. I had spent the whole previous week on my lessons and was pretty sure I had a solid plan for the sixth grade. Again, this group had been with me now for three years, and they were always great, so I was not expecting any surprises when they entered my room. I would be lying, though, if I said I was not thrown totally off guard on that first day of school. We worked through the lesson. They did everything perfectly. The dance? Perfect. The body percussion exercise? Had it learned in two repetitions. The instrumental piece we worked on? Melody and accompaniment mastered. They left smiling, happy, laughing. “See you Thursday, Mr. Southard!” The catch? This lesson was supposed to last through two classes. That WAS my Thursday lesson. They had just blown through it like it was nothing. They were so proud of themselves because they knew they had surprised me.

Thursday. New dance, new body percussion, new piece. Check. Check. Check. They all smiled at me with that “impressed, right?” look. But then Korbin spoke up. “What about the piece we did Tuesday?” I had no answer. “What about it?” “We’re not done with that, are we? We all talked about it, and we liked that piece.” Everyone, I am not making this up. Those were her exact words. “We all talked about it.” They walked out again, smiling, this time with a “We’ve given you a challenge ... see you Tuesday,” look. And that is how the entire year went. They pushed me. Every time they came down the hall, I knew I had better have a great lesson with possible extensions, or they would call me on it. And what was wonderful about them was that they were great kids, exceptional kids, always asking what was next with pure innocence and excitement. They helped each other in ways I had not thought of and arrived at patterns and forms using approaches I had taught them in other lessons where I would never have seen the connections. They talked about the music lesson during other parts of the day and then come back with a “What if we did this instead?” or “Could we change that one part?” Occasionally, I even got a “If you would’ve taught it like this, we would’ve gotten

it!” Always said with a smile and sideways look because they liked to give me a hard time.

They were the first class with which I attempted *Street Song*. We all really worked together on that one. My snare drum player got his pattern right every other time. I figured that out about a week before the program. So, on the day of the program, I secretly made sure to end our rehearsal on a time where I assumed he would struggle, and he did. “Mr. Southard, I messed up, can we try it one more time?” “Nah,” I told him, “you’ll be fine, I promise.” And, of course, he nailed it.

So how does this story connect with *Be*, the feature/topic of *The Orff Echo* Summer issue? Well, that group of students let me *be* a new teacher. They let me *be* a teacher who did not know everything. They let me *be* a teacher who was learning how to teach. If a lesson did not go the way I planned, they let me figure it out without acting out, without bad attitudes, and without feigning boredom. They were patient with me as I learned. They were wise beyond their years, and it was the 2007-2008 Waveland Elementary sixth-grade class that taught me how to teach. When they left to go to the junior-senior high, I, too, left Southmont schools. A closer-to-home opportunity arose, and I have been there ever since. Not a school year passes, though, when I do not think back to Waveland Elementary and the lessons those sixth graders taught me.

Waveland has since closed and those kids are grown up now; some have married and have their own children. They might or might not remember me and the music class they attended for four years, but they and the impact they made will always hold a special place with me. To those students, thank you. Thank you for letting me *be* your teacher.

In closing, I would also like to say “thank you” to our members of the National Board of Trustees

They Were **That** Class.



PHOTOGRAPHER: JOSH SOUTHARD, 2008.

whose terms are ending this summer. So much work is done behind the scenes to make AOSA an organization its members can be proud of, and it is because dedicated servant-leaders make it happen. **Kathy Hummel, Dan Guillick, Armando Campos, Heather Klossner, and Karin Prouty**—on behalf of the Executive Committee, the NBT, and the members of AOSA, thank you for your leadership, your ideas, and your service.

I hope everyone has a wonderful summer and has the opportunity just to *be*. ■

JOSH SOUTHARD is the music specialist at Smoky Row Elementary School in Carmel, Indiana, where he teaches kindergarten through Grade 5 music. He is a past president of the Indiana Orff Schulwerk Association and has served on the AOSA National Board of Trustees. Josh teaches Basic I, II, and III AOSA Teacher Education Levels Courses, and is currently serving as AOSA president.

IN THIS ISSUE

By Linda Hines with Christine Ballenger, Diana Hawley, and Erika Knapp

Be

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Be yourself. Be different. Be positive. Be prepared. Be kind. Be the change. We hear these statements proclaimed daily from every form of media. Yet, are we listening? In this issue, we invite you to consider the power and promise of exploring the enigmatic *be*.

Our first offering, with commentary by **Martha O’Hehir**, provides an opportunity to ponder your *be* as it relates to the legacies of those who came before you. **Sue Snyder, Donna Fleetwood and Carolee Stewart, Karen Petty, Charles Paella, and Judy Bond and Jane Frazee** pay tribute to their friends and colleagues, AOSA luminaries who paved the way for future generations and whose attitudes and attributes, words and deeds resonate to this day.

More inspiration comes in our next article in which **Roger Sams** recounts the impact his teachers and models had on his development as a music educator. He calls into play “Self as Instrument,” a major tenet of Gestalt theory and, in an exceptional way, encourages every Orff Schulwerk practitioner to acknowledge their lasting impression on their students.

What processes and practices smooth the way to purposeful self-reflection? **Michelle Jamieson** invites educators to consider the Seven Pillars of Mindfulness practice and discover how it enhances and complements the processes already embedded in Orff Schulwerk classrooms.

What other practices can facilitate one’s chosen self-reflection process? **Kerri Lynn Nicols** details

experiences designed to provide safe spaces for personal growth, challenge, and success while utilizing key elements of the Orff Schulwerk approach—the voice, the body, and the interaction with others in space and time.

Our contemplation enfolds numerous human aspects. **Adam VanPelt** presents a beautiful invitation to consider his process of radical being, which cultivates spaces of belonging in and through Orff Schulwerk-inspired practices for teachers and students alike.

In our next offering, **Amy Melton** details how teacher disposition plays an important role in culturally responsive teaching. She assesses the Five Rs of Reflexivity and explains how, when educators apply them in the classroom, they nurture in-the-moment awareness and sharpen the power of observation in meaningful ways.

Our exploration touches on a lighter note as **Jody Petter** invites educators to consider embracing humor and playfulness in the music classroom. She shares how implementing these practices have affected her relationships with her own students and how a lighthearted approach supports various Orff Schulwerk processes and the overall classroom culture.

This issue’s children’s books, *ABC and you and me*, reviewed by **Deanna Peters**, and *A Song for the Unsung: Bayard Rustin, the Man Behind the 1963 March on Washington*, reviewed by **Ramon L. Jackson**, invite teachers to explore music and movement through the ABCs and to learn about the civil rights movement through songs and music.

Throughout this issue, your colleagues have shown that *be-ing* promises many forms of expression. As you explore your own perception of this paradox, take a look at this issue’s Coda page. You might discover that the secret to being is as simple as how you spend your days. ■

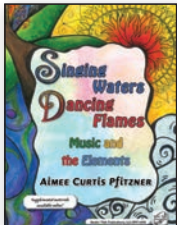
LINDA HINES is editor in chief of *The Orff Echo*. Issue coordinators **CHRISTINE BALLENGER, DIANA HAWLEY, and ERIKA KNAPP** collaborated on this issue. They are all AOSA-approved teacher educators and Orff Schulwerk practitioners and enthusiasts.

Thank You and Welcome!

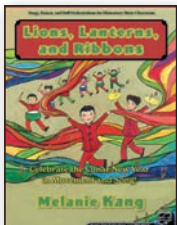
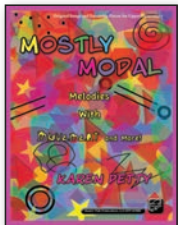
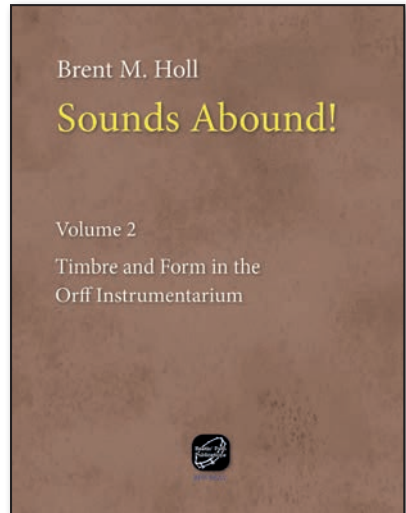
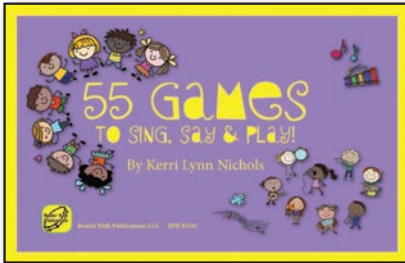
Please join us in thanking **JULIANA CANTARELLI VITA** for her service and contributions as a member of *The Orff Echo* Editorial Board. As Juliana's term ends, we would like to welcome our newest member:



KELLY A. POQUETTE, assistant professor of music education at Greensboro College, is a veteran educator with certifications from the American Orff-Schulwerk Association and the Feierabend Association for Music Education. She has received district-, regional-, and state-level accolades, including being named the 2021 Burroughs Wellcome Fund Piedmont-Triad Region Teacher of the Year. Kelly has taught all grades from pre-kindergarten through graduate students virtually and in person. She holds a BA from Wisconsin Lutheran College, an MM Ed from VanderCook College of Music, and a PhD from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, all in Music Education. Her article, "Meaningful Movement Connection: Virtually and In-Person," will appear in *The Orff Echo* Fall 2024 issue.



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Remembering AOSA Luminaries

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Commentary

Martha O'Hehir

The longer we live and move, teach and write in the milieu of the American Orff-Schulwerk Association community, the more we realize we are all torch bearers and baton passers, running the race while we can, holding in our hearts a passion for transmitting the gifts of culture and literature, active music making and dancing. We generously spill the energy of our lives for the benefit of nurturing the human spirit in the children we teach and the colleagues we team with, through music and movement education.

Surely, each of us can point to a few very special mentors in AOSA. This year, we note with sadness the final pass of the torch of several of our founding guides and mentors, those who caught the original spirit of Orff Schulwerk, performed their personal alchemy with it, and in true servant-leadership, revolutionized music education in the United States and, indeed, the world.

Only the youngest of our organization's members may not know these names and the dedication they brought to AOSA and to Orff Schulwerk. For many of us, it is hard to imagine life without these special colleagues and friends in it. Yet, none of us would be here, doing what we love to do, without them. If you can imagine it, there were no AOSA Levels courses, no Orff instruments, no *Echo* or *Reverberations*, no AOSA, and no Volumes when these music educators began their careers. All of this we have now because of them and their peers.

In these last hallowed years, we are saying goodbye to some noble and generous spirits who, by chance and by karma, found themselves ignited by a common vision of a new and exciting approach to music education that placed the person—whether child or adult—and the community gathered in space and time, at the center of the creative process. Guiding people to express *together* their heart's dreams and loves through music, movement, and drama is an ancient, almost shamanic, endeavor. Somehow, our founders in the 20th and 21st centuries paved a path and gave us the light and the tools to recreate in our schools, churches, and communities this "elemental music making," which from time immemorial has shaped us all into *more human* beings.

As you read these memorials, can you see yourself one day being the beloved mentor, the one who helped the team, the one who gave their all, the one who brought vision and loving guidance for the health of what is best in all of us?



MARILYN COPELAND
Davidson

(1934–2023)



By Sue Snyder

Marilyn Davidson was a masterful leader and performer. Across her many roles, the traits her friends and colleagues remembered were Marilyn's warmth, kindness, friendship, generosity, humor, imagination, love of family, musicality, passion for our work, problem-solving, and deep understanding of teaching and learning.

A child prodigy, Marilyn received her diploma in piano from Julliard School of Music in 1956. She first experienced Orff Schulwerk during her 1950s bachelor's and master's studies at Ball State University when Arnold Burkhardt was introducing Orff Schulwerk into the United States. She often spoke about her high school choir and performances at Shortridge High School in Indianapolis, Indiana, where she taught Isabel Carley's children, forging a relationship with Isabel and life-long friendships with those students.

I met Marilyn in 1974 in Bergenfield, New Jersey, where she guided our four elementary music educators in creating an Orff-Kodály curriculum that became an MENC curriculum model. We wove the best of our student-centered experiences with philosophical foundations of the major music education approaches, behavioral sciences, and best teaching practices. Marilyn's calm, intuitive, insistent logic developed our skills. We invited clinicians teaching Orff Schulwerk summer workshops at local universities to return for workshops during the year, forming the Northern New Jersey Orff Schulwerk Association, chartered as AOSA Chapter 49 in 1977. What a dynamic time as Orff Schulwerk spread across the country and the world!

We built the summer workshop Levels courses at Teacher's College, Columbia University, where Marilyn's daughters Diana and Jenny provided childcare. Elaine Larson remembers shadowing Marilyn at that time for Level I, before teaching it herself. We expanded courses to William Paterson College, The Hartt School of Music, C.W. Post, Central Connecticut University, and across the country.

Marilyn served as AOSA president from 1991 to 1993. Her organizational and interpersonal skills

brought the membership together to share and celebrate the growth of the Orff Schulwerk approach.

Along with other AOSA members, Marilyn made groundbreaking progress in secondary education by participating in the first ever Alliance for Active Music Making session at an AOSA conference in 2002. This presentation, involving leaders from four organizations, culminated with a positive response to active music making as the basis of music teaching and learning.

From 1980 until 2018, Marilyn was a driving force in the creation and marketing of music education textbooks for Macmillan/McGraw-Hill. Along with several co-authors, her successes included *Music and You*, *Share the Music*, *Spotlight on Music*, and *Music Studio*. The focus on overarching curriculum goals and lessons incorporating Orff Schulwerk was instrumental in spreading the approach to classrooms throughout the United States.

Marilyn created and presented with Paul Winter and Bob McGrath (Sesame Street). She was also a lecturer for the NY Philharmonic, Lincoln Center, and Carnegie Hall. The resulting materials have been indispensable to teachers across the United States and around the world.

If the test of a leader is the ability to help each person be the best version of themselves, Marilyn was a master. Ultimately, the beneficiaries of her expertise, artistry, and leadership were her students. I, like many teachers she guided, learned to focus my energy and insights into the person I am today. Though she will be missed, her work remains woven into the Orff Schulwerk community and in our continued efforts to achieve the excellence she exemplified.

Marilyn, daughter Jenny, niece Marla, and great-niece Miranda singing the family song, *The Prayer Perfect*. (<https://dmr.bsu.edu/digital/collection/ShtMus/id/2577/>)



SOURCE: PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE FAMILY OF MARILYN DAVIDSON.



By Donna Fleetwood and Carolee Stewart

"We must look now to the future. We must take with us the respect, the caring, and the joy. ... [and] all the flowers and applaud wildly when new ones arrive and take root with us."

This quote from Carol Erion's first President's Message in the Fall of 1993 acknowledges our roots and envisions our future. These words expressed Carol's ability to think beyond the status quo and lead others in pursuit of dreams and goals on behalf of Orff Schulwerk and AOSA.

Carol's dream of an Orff Schulwerk course in the D.C. area took root in the early 1980s when she brought together Fairfax County music education leaders eager to offer the Orff Schulwerk approach to their teachers. George Mason University's nascent music program provided a site, and the course became a reality. Her dream went further—to create a community of lifelong learners by establishing one of the first Orff Schulwerk Supplemental Programs designed as a path for exploring Orff Schulwerk beyond three levels. Carol infused joyful exploration and innovation into the Mason course, emphasizing high standards to develop skillful teachers in the practice. The George Mason AOSA Teacher Education Levels Course remains one of the oldest and largest in the United States.

Her dream expanded when she was elected to serve as a regional representative on the NBT and also chaired the Professional Development Committee. Her work supporting good Orff Schulwerk teaching is evident in the *Guidelines for Teacher Education*, revised during her presidency and affirming that the approach encompasses music, movement, and speech.

Carol's term as president (1993–1995) came at a historical juncture: AOSA members celebrated our 25th anniversary in 1993 and the Carl Orff Centenary in 1995. Carol encouraged us to celebrate our accomplishments as we looked forward. Considering future possibilities, she led the NBT in a retreat that resulted in a 10-year plan addressing outreach, organization, professional development, and cultural diversity. Discussions in 1994 and the plan helped pave the way for the robust organization that exists today.

Carol with Daughter Liz on Xylophone.



SOURCE: PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE FAMILY OF CAROL ERION.

Following her presidency, Carol continued to serve AOSA. She was co-founder of the Midnight Historical Society and served on ad hoc committees, particularly those related to teacher education. Under her leadership, the first AOSA Curriculum Committee met to formalize and unify the Teacher Education Levels Courses throughout the United States, creating a living document to address AOSA's ever-changing, expanding mission to support these courses. She served on the editorial board of *The Orff Echo* and participated in several Meeting of the Minds panels. In 2009, she received AOSA's Distinguished Service Award.

This quote from Carol's Spring 1995 President's Message exemplifies her leadership qualities. As you read it, picture her moving among us, always listening, always probing, "I wonder if it's possible to ..."

"Surely a large part of the appeal [of Orff Schulwerk] lies in the particular qualities its practitioners regularly exhibit: We take the time and spend the energy to break down barriers between people; we work hard to build connections—between individual and group, time and space, mind and body, art and life; we are

open and we respond with sincerity; we are clear about what we do and why we do it; we are playful, gentle, hard-working, and we care for one another. The very nature of Orff Schulwerk leads us to do so. And though we play, we move, we speak and sing, ultimately the appeal of Orff Schulwerk springs from someplace even deeper—its humanity.”



By Karen Petty

Barbara Grenoble was a true Pied Piper of Orff Schulwerk, drawing students and fellow teachers to this magical way of experiencing, teaching, and learning. I met Miss Grenoble the summer of 1981 while taking the Intro to Orff Schulwerk class and Level I. Knowing Barbara and learning from her changed my life for the better—forever. I am grateful to have had her as a teacher, mentor, and friend.

Barbara was a brave adventurer and true pioneer. She was in the first group to receive a teacher certificate from the University of Toronto in 1962. She was excited to share what she had learned with others, even while continuing to explore, learn, and hone her teaching craft. That generosity continued throughout her career. She was the founder and first president of the Rocky Mountain Chapter of AOSA—and nearly always present at workshops. When in small groups, I often marveled how Barbara could elicit ideas from the newest participants, welcoming and incorporating them, rather than pushing her own musical expertise to the forefront. The May chapter sharing session was often hosted at the Grenoble Studio of Musical Arts, where several times we did the Maypole dance out on the lawn.

Miss Grenoble influenced the teaching of Orff Schulwerk nationally by instituting and directing one of the early AOSA Teacher Education programs at the University of Denver. Educators throughout the United States benefited from hundreds of workshops she gave at Orff Schulwerk chapters, national AOSA and MENC conferences, and Early Childhood Education Programs. In addition to AOSA Teacher Education Levels Courses, Barbara taught a curriculum course that ran throughout the school year—three 10-week sessions where she

generously shared her curriculum structure with lessons and seasonal ideas for primary and intermediate classes. She was a firm believer in learning by doing and often said, “Come with me for just a sec . . .,” after which a whole magical lesson unfolded. We experienced the lessons as the students did, and then stepped back to discover the teaching process and appreciate the essence of the lesson. Barbara was a master of teaching concepts with physical and visual connections, such as body percussion transferring to 4-line staff notation with sound arrows, which formed patterns for accompaniment and then transferred to pitched instruments.

Barbara taught me the importance of choosing the best quality teaching materials, those that can be developed and built upon over time, rather than flashy, trite one-and-done songs. She contended materials and songs needed to have enough depth to keep the interest of both students and teachers as exploration evolved over several sessions or when circling back through several years.

A child-like sense of wonder and imagination was an integral part of Barbara’s teaching. She brought stories, picture books, and children’s literature into her lessons, along with drama and musical settings, long before this became common practice. Her gentle spirit, calm voice and demeanor, unsurpassed musicality, and immense understanding of children were apparent in her interactions with students and colleagues alike. She always sought ways to deliver the ideal lesson and evoke the imaginations of her

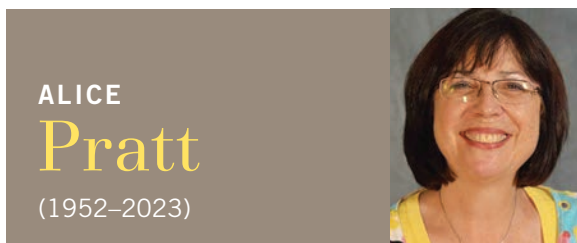
Barbara Creating Joy and Excitement with Her Students at National Jewish Hospital, ca. 1968/1970.



SOURCE: PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE GRENABLE STUDIO OF MUSICAL ARTS.

students. She will be sorely missed by all who were fortunate enough to learn from her.

To know more about this grand lady and teacher, I encourage you to read Liz Gilpatrick's article, "The Sounds of those Instruments – A Portrait of Barbara Grenoble," from *The Orff Echo*, Fall 2001 issue.



By Charles Palella

Pat: "Alice, this is Charles. He just started teaching with us. Charles, this is Alice Pratt."

Alice: "Hi, Charles, and welcome! So when are you going to be president of the chapter?"

This is precisely how I met Alice at my very first workshop of the Greater Rochester American Orff-Schulwerk Association. She and my mentor had a good laugh at the surprised look on my face, and we went on with the workshop. I might have had an extra cup of coffee at that point. Alice would have to wait a few years, but I did become chapter president eventually. As most people who have met her can attest, she was a compelling force.

Alice was a loving and savvy leadership machine. Her work on the national level is already the stuff of history and legend. She led by example in her service, but was not shy in the least about fostering leadership in others. Inspired by Alice's support and personal invitation to be active on the national level, countless GRAOSA chapter presidents and board members have served as regional reps, NCCs, national committee members, writers for AOSA publications, and more.

Alice: "Charles, Al is rotating off the NBT. Let me help you with your application."

Charles: "Um, what?"

Alice lived her love and belief in the young people of the world. She inspired thousands of children in the Rochester City School District to believe in themselves and supported their journey as they grew to be the future. New members to GRAOSA were welcomed warmly and oriented to the way we do things in Orff Schulwerk. After retiring, she turned her energies toward supporting preservice teachers at Nazareth University in Rochester, New York.

This is how I remember Alice. We sang together in workshops. We did some delightfully creative things with scarves. She could play the nonsense out of a xylophone. Was there a movement activity, and I was tired and planned to "take notes?" Not on her watch! Golly we had fun.

Alice: "Charles, see if you can get the new teachers to dance, they need to move!"

There was a spark of righteous anger in Alice as well. All activities, philosophies, approaches, materials, and ideas had to pass through a simple filter: "How is this good for children?" If something could be of use to even one child then it passed, but woe unto anything that did not pass. If something did not serve her students, or worse, made things difficult or complicated for them, she had no use for it and would let it be known—out loud!

Orff wanted us to allow children to be their own composers. Alice embodied this philosophy in those she encountered. All of us fortunate to call her our teacher, friend, colleague, mother, and more were nurtured through her skill, knowledge, and love for composing a bright future for ourselves and our communities. Her

Alice and Tiffany Ready to Proudly Carry the Banner at the 2015 AOSA Professional Development Conference, San Diego, California.



SOURCE: PHOTO COURTESY OF TIFFANY ENGLISH.

light continues to shine as we, in turn, support our own students, children, and young adults to be the best versions of themselves they can create.



By Judy Bond and Jane Frazee

Arvida was a friend, trusted colleague, and mentor to many, and I count myself among those who were blessed by the beauty of her presence among us. In body, mind, and spirit, Arvida exemplified the magic of Orff Schulwerk. When I am looking for an uplift to my spirit, I often return to her essay, “It’s Magic” from AOSA’s *A Walk In the Wildflowers*, where she presented a deep dive into the Orff Schulwerk philosophy, beyond knowledge and skill, through describing the impact of teaching *with* children rather than *to* children. She credits teachers who were her students with asking questions that led to her own deeper thinking and growth, her pathway to greater understanding of the *why* underlying the

magic of Orff Schulwerk. In the words of Beth Nelson, former director of the AOSA Teacher Education Levels Courses at the University of St. Thomas, “Arvida firmly believed in the power of not only learning *what* to teach, but *how* to teach it, with artistry always being the goal for the students and the teacher.” The magic of Arvida’s thinking, teaching, and leadership was truly a gift to us all. —JB

Anyone who wants to know Arvida must understand her love of family. That love extended to her adult students as well as to the children she loved to teach. As Arvida was growing up, her family attended to her musical instruction on the violin and piano. But it was singing that came most naturally to her, and she participated joyfully in church choir throughout her life. Her adult family included a husband and three daughters, and she happily augmented this nuclear family with Orff Schulwerk students of all ages.

To know Arvida we must also understand her love of work. She pursued her Orff Schulwerk career passionately, first writing arrangements for Orff instruments to accompany folk songs, then offering a major contribution to Orff Schulwerk curriculum development with *Exploring Orff: A Teacher’s Guide*.

In the middle of this busy life, Arvida managed to earn a master’s degree in music education at

Arvida Teaching with Her Audience, November, 1996.



SOURCE: THE GREATER CLEVELAND CHAPTER OF THE AMERICAN ORFF-SCHULWERK ASSOCIATION.

the University of Wisconsin. She accomplished this by taking a year off from classroom duties and commuting weekly from Minneapolis to Madison, Wisconsin—after spending weekends at home with her family.

As she approached the end of her career, Arvida began to reflect and write about the educational process of music teaching. She also enthusiastically became a volunteer teacher as well as a mentor to Orff Schulwerk teachers who requested her help.

Finally, Arvida was a leader in the Orff Schulwerk movement because of her diplomatic skills. As AOSA president, she listened, respected the views of others, and brought consensus to issues facing the National Board of Trustees.

I often teased Arvida by insisting that she could solve the world's conflicts if she would just give up her love of Orff Schulwerk. Thank goodness she did not. Our music education family is much the better for her love of all of us. —JF



These testimonies all share a common theme of *receiving and giving*. These individuals received a vision of elemental music making that they gave to students of all ages, and in the giving, the gift was multiplied. Each of them was *original and yet faithful*. They upheld basic foundational attributes of Orff Schulwerk while bringing their own unique talents and contexts—historical, regional, musical, and educational—in service of creativity and humanity. Most of all, *they shone their torch light on others*, bringing new people forth as leaders, passing that torch and the baton and cheering all the runners, never uttering, “Look at me!” but always “Wow, look at you!” —MOH ■



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Being Norma Jean Swaisgood: Self as Instrument

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ROGER SAMS has been a clinician and Orff Schulwerk instructor for over three decades, having worked with teachers and children in Canada, China, Croatia, Indonesia, India, Poland, Scotland, Singapore, South Korea, Spain, and throughout the United States. He is co-author of *Purposeful Pathways: Possibilities for the Elementary Music Room*. Trained in Gestalt therapy, Roger works with the power of choice in the artistic process, pedagogy, and life. He is the owner of Soulwerk Sanctuary.

ABSTRACT

Music educators use Self as Instrument, a term from Gestalt theory, as they work to develop and support the young musicians in their care. Often, teachers are unaware of their full weight and power unless a former student lets them know. In this article, the author shares stories of how his music teachers and models affected him and shaped his life and how music educators' work matters in their students' lives through their use of Self as Instrument.

By Roger Sams

I love stories. Before I discovered Orff Schulwerk, I was a professional storyteller who studied and told folktales from around the world, making connections across cultures. Reading, listening to, and telling stories plays a significant role in how we know ourselves. Orff recognized the power of integrating the arts of music, dance, and drama to tell stories, and I experience Orff Schulwerk as similar to storytelling. Much of what we do has been passed down from one generation to the next through active participation and engagement in community. In storytelling, we call this the oral tradition.

The stories we tell ourselves about our lives shape who we are. Embracing the storyteller in me, I hope to inspire you to dig deeply into your life stories by sharing some of mine, as they relate to my life as an Orff Schulwerk teacher and as a Gestalt practitioner. And through the telling of my stories, perhaps you will think about your stories and how they might shape the futures of those we teach through the power of recognizing *Self as Instrument*.

Roger's Stories

The summer after fourth grade my family moved to a new home in rural northwest Ohio, County Road 32 to be specific. That move brought Norma Jean Swaisgood into my life (see Figure 1, p. 19). Norma Jean was a young woman, short and



Figure 1. Norma Jean Swaisgood, ca. 2008. Roger's First Life-Changing Music Teacher and First Music Student.

solid, with an honest smile and a presence that oozed goodness. Norma's voice was deep and rich, a full octave below my unchanged boy voice. She was an unapologetic tenor and the choir director in my new school district. She was also my sister's piano teacher. Every week Norma would come to our home and give her a lesson out of the red John Thompson book that was the standard at that time. Most of those weeks I was sitting around the corner listening.

I could not take piano lessons because my father had a strict one-instrument per kid rule, born mostly out of financial necessity. I took guitar lessons, thus no piano lessons for me. Nonetheless, I would listen to my sister's lessons, take that big red book, and practice.

Norma Jean was not unaware of my stealth piano practicing. At the end of fifth grade, she told me she wanted to learn guitar and wondered if I might be willing to give her guitar lessons in exchange for piano lessons. I was thrilled to accept this invitation. Eventually, as adult Orff Schulwerk teacher colleagues, I once spoke with her about her cunning way of giving me free piano lessons. She laughed and reminded me she did learn to play guitar that summer, and it probably would not have happened without our barter. Thus, Norma Jean Swaisgood was my first music student.

I was not allowed to be in the fifth- and sixth-grade band, because of the one instrument rule. A few weeks before I began seventh grade, Norma showed up for Shelly's piano lesson with an old baritone. She plopped that beat up instrument down in front of my father and informed him that the school owned it. I could use it for free. Key word: FREE. The band director would give me lessons at school, which she had already set up. She looked my dad square in the eye and said, "The boy needs to be in band." And so it was. That summer day in 1970, Norma Jean Swaisgood changed my life. She recognized that the musician in me needed to be nurtured. She saw to it that what was best in me had a chance to thrive.

Figure 2. Gene Lehman, ca. 1976. Roger's High School Band and Choir Director.



Next, Gene Lehman was my band and choir director from eighth grade through high school (see Figure 2). He was responsible—almost singlehandedly—for my musical education during those years, and he saw to it that I was ready to be a music major in college. He was more than a teacher. He was a mentor. I knew I was valued, even loved, in his classroom.

Late in his career, Mr. Lehman moved to a new town and became an elementary general music teacher. He was my AOSA Teacher Education Level I student at The University of Akron, early in my days as a teacher educator. I know he benefitted pedagogically from being a part of that class, but I think the most important thing he got out the experience was a heaping portion of validation for his life's work. He once told a friend of mine, "All it takes is just one student to let you know that your whole career mattered. Roger's that student for me."

When he was my Levels student, I called him Mr. Lehman in class and he stopped everything to say, "I'm your student now. You are the teacher. Please call me Gene." And he was proud. He was proud of me and he was proud of himself for having contributed to the formation of me. I have no idea who I would be today if Gene Lehman had not been in my life.

I would love to tell you stories about Sylvia Easley and Bitty Dorr; about Gail Kopetz, Jane Frazee, Avida Steen (see Figure 3), and Nancy Miller. All remarkable women who helped shape me as a music educator and have been unwavering cheerleaders in my life. Each one of them has made an invaluable contribution to who I am. This is Self as Instrument. Self as Instrument is who we are when we show up in our full humanity for our students, lovingly nurturing them to the best of our abilities.

Figure 3. Arvida Steen with Roger, ca. 2010. Arvida Was Roger’s Model for Heartful Teaching.



Gestalt Theory and Self as Instrument

Gestalt theory informs my work as a music educator. Early on, I recognized that music and movement were transformational forces in my classroom and in my life. I wanted to understand this phenomenon, so I enrolled at the Gestalt Institute of Cleveland, eventually graduating from their training program in 2000, and then completing Working with Groups and Advanced Working with Groups training.

Gestalt means whole, and Gestalt and Orff Schulwerk have many similarities. Both fields of study were conceived in pre-World War II Germany. Fritz Pearls, who founded Gestalt therapy, and Carl Orff birthed new approaches that were radical departures from current practice in their time. They expanded the realm of possibility, choosing to focus on how to empower others in new ways. They took the focus off the teacher/practitioner and put it on the student/client. I can say, without hesitation, that it is through

intimate relationship with myself and others via Orff Schulwerk that I have come to experience myself as whole. Orff Schulwerk played a significant role in my healing journey as a psycho-spiritually wounded human. I am a wounded healer. I recognize that wounded healers hold powerful space for others on their healing journeys. This happens in AOSA Teacher Education Levels Courses organically. We do not have to work to make it happen. Art-making from the heart is a healing process; the art made during Levels courses is both healing and informative.

Who we are and how we do ourselves in our classrooms and in our lives deeply affects those around us. In Gestalt Organizational Systems and Development (OSD) work, Self as Instrument is considered core to being a skilled consultant that supports organizational change and growth. I propose that Self as Instrument is core to any thriving classroom as well. The teacher utilizes the full self in holding space for student growth. When we respond authentically with delight to their beautiful musicianship, that is Self as Instrument. When we model a simple improvisation to make a point, such as how to create a sense of tonic or home tone, or how to make improvisation sound like it has a relationship with the piece upon which we are improvising, that is Self as Instrument. When we are deeply moved by the beauty of our students’ singing, that is Self as Instrument. Teachers utilize Self as Instrument in their classrooms, without realizing it, all day long, every day. This is why we work to improve personal musicianship in the Orff Schulwerk media during Levels courses. Our proficiency in elemental music and dance-making greatly affects the quality of our Self as Instrument in the classroom. This is why it is important to attend to our personal struggles and challenges, utilizing therapy, pastoral care, or quality listeners in our lives to support us in showing up “clean and clear” for our students. Teachers who are consumed with personal challenges at home or in life, cannot be fully present in the classroom, impairing their use of Self as Instrument. Self as Instrument requires a fusion of head and heart, of both skills and emotions.

Connection, Oneness, and the Elemental

For many of us, movement is where the magic happens. Moving our bodies authentically with open hearts invites access to more of ourselves. That does not just happen. A skilled teacher creates safe space and nurtures skills that offer the possibility

of transcendence through movement. I had my first experience of what I would call Oneness as a student in Nancy Miller's Level II movement course at Hamline University. We were mirroring. Nancy had prepared the experience by reviewing and practicing mirroring skills from Level I. We each had our turn being the lead, eventually trading leadership effortlessly. Then she set up the final exercise. The task was to mirror our partners without communicating who was leading. Nancy warned us the music was going to last a very long time. She told us we would get uncomfortable and said we might want to giggle, look away, or do any number of things to avoid the discomfort. Although intimacy can be uncomfortable, she bid us not to do so. What Nancy knew was that when we move through the discomfort zone, magical things can happen if we stay present without agenda.

The music was indeed extraordinarily long. My partner René and I stayed connected throughout. We reached a point where there was no longer leader and follower, but one dancing unit, our bodies, minds, and hearts connected in Oneness. The boundary

When you pay attention to your pedagogical choices and to how you do yourself in your classroom, you are simultaneously teaching your students how to be responsible for their own choices as musicians and as human beings.

between us as individuals vanished. It was one of the most beautiful and sacred experiences I have had in this lifetime. The Gestalt, the wholeness, of who we were as a dyad transcended our experience of ourselves as individuals and birthed something I had never experienced before—being totally one with all of who I am and another human being.

That experience moved me so deeply that it totally changed my relationship with movement and with my capacity for connection with others. I do not often get that courageously vulnerable, but when I do the emotional rewards of connection are worth the risks of intimacy. This is the power of Orff Schulwerk. Elemental music and dance-making supports us in touching what is best and most beautiful within



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- Roger Sams

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ourselves and each other. It connects us to our wholeness and the wholeness of life.

I think we are often too simplistic in our understanding of what elemental music and dance-making really is. It is so much more than simple patterns and forms. It is essential to our humanity. This is by design and was the clear intent of this work from the beginning. As cited by Hepburn (2011),

Dr. Herman Regner ... stated in a speech given [in 1977] at the first National Conference for Carl Orff Canada, "It would not be right to wish to define elemental music as music made of elements. I believe it to be wrong to consider the two-note call, the simple repetitive melodies, the drone bass or simple rhythmic patterns as elements." Regner later continued, "Musical object is transformed through the creative process that allows it, in its simplicity, to become an elemental experience for the actively involved human being."

It was the elemental core belief that bound Carl Orff together with Dorothee Günther, who would become the catalyst for Orff to develop his Schulwerk, and who would provide the environment for Orff to bring his Schulwerk to fruition. Günther later wrote about her aims, as cited by Liess in 1966, "When I founded the Günther Schule in 1924, I wanted to discover a method of reviving the natural unity of music and movement-music and dance; a method which would be available not only to a few natural artists but would solve the education problem of awakening in everyone the sense of rhythmic movement, and of stimulating a love of dancing and music making—a general freedom of expression and receptivity. This unity of music and movement was not to be based on incidental and subjective experience but on their elemental relationship, in that they arise from a single source." (p. 3)

Putting it into Practice

I have been fortunate to have had many life-changing music teachers but there is no one right way to be that life-changing music educator. You are going to be the absolute best teacher you can be if you listen to your heart and teach from a place that has authentic resonance within you. As you find your authentic voice, you are going to be teaching your students how to be responsible, artful choice-makers and good human beings who care about others. You do it by modeling. You model being responsible. You model being artful.

You model care for others. When you pay attention to your pedagogical choices and to how you do yourself in your classroom, you are simultaneously teaching your students how to be responsible for their own choices as musicians and as human beings. We all know that modeling is one of the most powerful forms of teaching. Modeling is Self as Instrument.

Do you see the bigness of this work? Music teachers matter. Who you choose to be matters every single day. Jane Frazee (see Figure 4) is one of my most significant mentors. In 2012 *Purposeful Pathways* was published, as was Jane's book, *Artful-Playful-Mindful*. In the exhibit hall we had a brief, yet complete, experience of our deep connection—of our Oneness. We held each other's arms and looked into each other's eyes saying very few words. Our eyes filled with tears, but we did not give ourselves permission to cry, not there in the middle of the exhibit hall. Non-verbally, Jane communicated how proud she was of me, and how she knew her work lives on through me. She knew my heart and how much I valued her for her teaching, for her nurturing, for her example, and for her love.

Figure 4. Roger with Jane Frazee, His Model of Clarity and Purpose-Driven Teaching, ca. 2010.



That night, in my hotel room, I realized that I was the same age that Jane Frazee was when I first met her. I thought she was so full of wisdom when she was in her fifties and I was flirting with thirty. Then I realized that I am somebody's Jane Frazee!

I have also been a Norma Jean Swaisgood. I taught Leslie Rubio to play the clarinet when she was in fifth

grade, in 1982, my first year of teaching. She found me on Facebook years ago and sent me a private message that was the digital version of one of those letters every teacher dreams they might someday be worthy of receiving. She spoke about how my teaching unleashed a love of music in her young heart that motivated her to become a band director and how she wanted to be the kind of teacher I was to her decades ago.

Conclusion

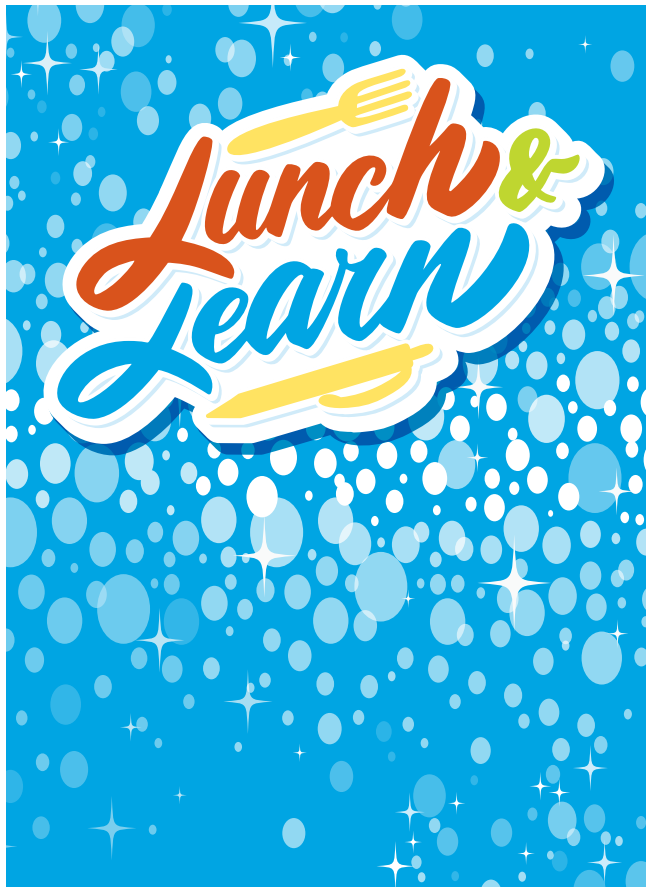
You are that teacher to somebody. You are the one who changes a fifth grader's life because you hold space for them to realize that they are a musician. Children do not yet have the capacity to know the imprint you are making on their lives, let alone communicate it. Maybe you will be fortunate to have a Leslie Rubio

come find you decades later and tell you. Maybe not, so let me tell you now. Music teachers matter. You matter. Your life's work matters. It is beautiful and it is important. You change lives every day through the use of Self as Instrument, yet you are rarely going to be acknowledged for this important work. I am grateful for all you have done to cultivate skills, understandings, and ways of being that nurture your students as artists and as humans. You make the world a better place. Thank you for choosing to be a music educator and for choosing to be the best you that you can muster up every day.

Next time you are feeling low and wondering if you really make a difference, I want you to remember that you are somebody's Norma Jean Swaisgood and somebody's Norma Jean Swaisgood is a beautiful thing to be. ■

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Writing for AOSA

**TWO CONFERENCE SESSIONS
FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2024
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AOSA is hosting a Lunch & Learn session for all who are interested in writing for *The Orff Echo* or *Reverberations*. Whether novice or expert, bring your lunch and your ideas and join Echo and Reverbs editors for step-by-step guidance in crafting your article. Come early or come later—the session will be repeated.

Check the Events and Programs section of the Conference page on the AOSA website for further details as they become available. See you there!

Mindfulness: Tools for Educators Teaching with the Orff Schulwerk Approach

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MICHELLE JAMIESON is an experienced music educator and doctoral candidate at Boston University. She teaches high school band, orchestra and choir in the Sacramento, California, area. Michelle also teaches the tools and skills of mindfulness, working in schools, corporations, and medical centers across California. She offers professional development in mindfulness and social emotional learning (SEL) for teachers and presents clinic sessions at state and national music conferences.

ABSTRACT

To facilitate students' musical exploration, educators must be willing to release a sense of authority and to adjust instruction moment by moment. One way they might achieve this is through mindfulness practices and tools. In this article, the author reviews the seven pillars of mindfulness practice and offers suggestions for how mindfulness can aid educators in guiding students with the Orff Schulwerk approach.

By Michelle Jamieson

According to Grace Nash, prominent Orff Schulwerk teacher, author, and recipient of AOSA's Distinguished Service Award, Orff Schulwerk is a process, not a method (Gilpatrick, 2009). Processes are beneficial in attempting to accomplish a task or learn something new, and the development of a step-by-step process is important in obtaining all the relevant information required to meet a goal or master a skill. If the goal is the end product rather than the process, however, educators might fall into the trap of what Gilpatrick (2009) referred to as *process-as-recipe educational formulas*, which consist of rote learning and drill exercises of repetition and imitation to produce a product, with replication as the desired outcome.

Orff Schulwerk lessons, in contrast, are neither scripted nor prescribed. Student readiness, rather than teacher expectation, determines progression from one lesson to the next (Cicco, 2020). As opposed to a product-oriented methodology, the Orff Schulwerk approach involves teachers "taking progressive steps to guide students toward short- and long-term goals that teachers do not define in advance" (Shamrock, 1986, p. 6). According to Orff (1963), music educators must let go of their authoritarian role in favor of a collaborative learning approach and be willing to embrace constantly developing, never-quite-finished possibilities. The approach is a relatively organic process that emerges out of the ideas and recommendations students offer in class, which, in turn, helps shape the students'



SOURCE: WWW.ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/BENJAVISIA

musical learning (Cicco, 2020). This approach allows the teacher to facilitate rather than dictate learning, increasing potential for more effective and meaningful classroom engagement that promotes learning.

Accomplishment is often viewed as the goal in education, with appropriate steps laid out by educators that aid students in completing the desired outcome. Focusing on the end goal is contradictory to the Orff Schulwerk approach, which favors the learning process over the outcome. In this case, I would encourage educators to release themselves from the obligation of doing anything and, instead, adopt a mindful way of being. Mindfulness has been shown to provide benefits such as acceptance and nonjudgment that educators can use to enhance their teaching. Practicing mindfulness provides potential ways for Orff Schulwerk educators to be engaged in process-over-product learning by developing skills such as presence and patience, a willingness to embrace mistakes, and openness to new ideas and suggestions.

Mindfulness

Although mindfulness is not universally defined, a common definition involves present-moment awareness that comes through intentionally paying attention without judgment (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). The concept of mindfulness originated in Asia with contemplative traditions such as Buddhism, but it also shares ideas with philosophical and psychological traditions such as ancient Greek philosophy; phenomenology, existentialism, and naturalism in Western Europe; and transcendentalism and humanism in the United States (Brown et al., 2007). The practice of mindfulness involves bringing attention and awareness to external and internal experiences as they are taking place and refraining from evaluating or judging them, which creates the opportunity to experience the present moment “as it is.” Thoughts that enter the mind are observed, acknowledged, and allowed to pass through, just like sounds, sights, and other sensory stimuli (Brown et al., 2007).

Benefits for Educators

Research findings on mindfulness for educators indicate positive results that support educator well-being (Marais et al., 2020). Scholars have begun to recognize mindfulness as an approach to reducing stress due to its ability to target attention and aid in emotion processing (Bishop et al., 2004). In one 8-week mindfulness intervention, for example, educators showed a reduction in psychological symptoms, burnout, and attentional biases with an increase in effective teaching behavior (Flook et al., 2013). Similarly, researchers conducting a study of middle school teachers concluded that practicing mindfulness was associated with lower levels of occupational burnout and job stress, suggesting that increased levels of mindfulness might contribute to positive interactions and deeper connections with students, affecting educators' occupational health and well-being (Braun et al., 2019).

Mindfulness practices can also have positive effects on music instruction. Chang et al. (2019) documented how mindfulness practice enhanced music teaching, fostering more flexibility, creativity, and sensitivity in teaching and aiding performance by allowing teachers to remain calm and focused. The authors encouraged fellow music educators to practice mindfulness and use mindfulness-based teaching strategies. Additional recommendations included establishing a mindful presence that allows educators to focus on the needs of the students. The student-centered approach promoted by the authors is also the main principle of culturally responsive teaching.

The Seven Pillars of Mindfulness

Mindfulness skills can be developed through the process of learning to pay attention. There are seven attitudes, called pillars, of mindfulness practice that help facilitate mindfulness (Kabat-Zinn, 2003), and each has the potential to enhance one's teaching through the Orff Schulwerk approach. Each pillar relies on and influences the others. The seven pillars of non-judging, patience, a beginner's mind,

trust, non-striving, acceptance, and letting go might help teachers meet students where they are and support student learning while also promoting skills of attention, awareness, and intention in teaching and in life. Following are descriptions of each pillar and examples of how the attitudes presented can be applied in the Orff Schulwerk classroom.

1. *Non-Judging*

Whether people realize it or not, they constantly make judgments about their experiences, big or small, that take up valuable time and mind space. With a release of judgment, for instance, it could simply be raining outside, without all the thoughts that typically accompany the observation. In music education, constant evaluation of expectations of behavior and performance is common, and judgment is often disguised as assessment. The rigid beliefs prescribed in the recipe-like learning process of recitation and imitation described by Gilpatrick (2009) do not allow for student exploration and the self-discovery that comes through the intrinsic power of learning. Student responsibility and choice allow for change, and change, according to Gilpatrick (2009), "is the essence of process and, I believe, the essence of Orff Schulwerk" (p. 26). Non-judging in the classroom can foster change and allow for student self-discovery. An example of non-judging in the Orff Schulwerk classroom is refraining from directing or taking control of a student's work that could result in eliminating or diminishing a student's voice or choice.

2. *Patience*

A common adage states, "patience is a virtue." The ability to be patient demonstrates an understanding and acceptance that some things need to unfold in their own time. In mindfulness practice, patience is cultivated when working with the mind as it wanders and dealing with the variety of thoughts that arise. Opportunities abound to practice patience with our students in the learning process. In an Orff Schulwerk classroom, this means allowing our students to experience trial-and-error, giving them the space to take risks, and supporting them in their music exploration.

3. *Beginner's Mind*

When practicing mindfulness, cultivating an attitude of a beginner's mind means freeing oneself from past experiences and expectations about what will happen.

The seven pillars of non-judging, patience, a beginner's mind, trust, non-striving, acceptance, and letting go might help teachers meet students where they are and support student learning while also promoting skills of attention, awareness, and intention in teaching and in life.

Beginner’s mind involves letting go of preconceived beliefs to, instead, be curious and interested in each experience as if it were the first time—because it is. Traveling through brand new moments with the assumption of what will happen could lead to missing out on what is actually happening.

The same can easily occur in the music classroom. Experienced teachers often anticipate student mistakes, sometimes even circumventing the error with additional instruction. When educators recognize that learning is an ever-changing and non-linear process, they can approach a familiar lesson as if teaching it for the first time. Responsive, constantly evolving communication and collaboration are at the heart of the Orff Schulwerk approach. A music teacher’s improvisational artistry facilitates flexible and creative interactions with students that enhance musicking and learning.

4. Trust

Trust is an attitude developed over time. In the music classroom, students learn to trust their teachers, classmates, and their own abilities. One of the intentions of Orff Schulwerk is to cultivate student-teacher relationships in which students recognize their autonomy and the teacher is not the only possessor of knowledge (Cicco, 2020). Educators can deepen relationships with their students by trusting in the processes of exploration and collaboration and focusing on making connections to what students are familiar with instead of insisting on a specific way to create music (Cicco, 2020).

Encouraging the attitude of trusting oneself and one’s inner wisdom is important in mindfulness practice (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). Educators can create a culture of trust where students feel safe to take risks and to be themselves. This can take place in the classroom by fostering respect and acceptance of each student’s unique creative contribution in music making, and through relationship-building activities or discussions that develop empathy and collaboration.

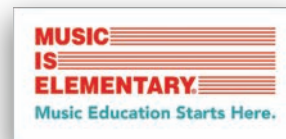
5. Non-Striving

At first glance, non-striving might seem counterintuitive in education, where educators regularly set goals for instruction and develop learning targets. The principle of non-striving involves releasing oneself from the narrow end-goal focus that prevents seeing and appreciating the journey. The intention is to see the goal as only one step in the process, not

as the ultimate reward. When the goal is an end product, often creativity and exploration are lost to replication as students strive to imitate the teacher’s performance. Although the music education process can start with imitation and rote learning in the acquisition of new knowledge, “imitation is not, and never can be, evidence of creativity” (Gilpatrick, 2009, p. 24). Being mindful of this and adopting a non-striving attitude can inspire educators to adjust expectations and focus on students’ needs, allowing for creativity in student exploration.

6. Acceptance

Common definitions of acceptance are: “to endure without protest or reaction” or “to recognize as true” (Miriam-Webster, 2024). In mindfulness, the concept of acceptance means “taking a stance of nonjudgmental awareness and actively embracing the experience of thoughts, feelings, and bodily sensations as they occur” (Hayes et al., 2004, p. 7). Examples of this type of acceptance include acknowledging when we feel angry or tired or refraining from judging



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a student's participation that does not appear as expected. Acceptance also includes observing and understanding our thoughts and feelings in order to recognize our tendencies and habits. Deeper, inner knowledge gives insight into knowing why someone's words made us anxious or rubbed us the wrong way, or why we are unsatisfied with a performance. Acceptance of the way things are and not as we wish, want, or hope they will be is valuable in developing inner wisdom that can guide thoughts, words, and actions throughout each day. The ability to accept is also useful in letting go of unproductive, unnecessary, or unfruitful thoughts.

Acceptance is important for educators when guiding their students through exploration in the music education classroom. In exploration, the center of control moves from the external source of the teacher to a student's internal source of the self (Gilpatrick, 2009). This can be an exciting but anxiety-producing venture for educators, but "our willingness to encourage, welcome and *be* change with children is a profound act in education—and in life" (p. 25). This shift provides many academic and social-emotional benefits for the student (a topic beyond the scope of this article), but also it allows the teacher to release control over the pacing and direction of student learning with the intention of developing students' inner wisdom and personal growth.

Acceptance of the way things are and not as we wish, want, or hope they will be is valuable in developing inner wisdom that can guide thoughts, words, and actions throughout each day.

7. Letting Go

The act of letting go is closely associated with acceptance. Kabat-Zinn (1990) described letting go as "a way of letting things be, of accepting things as they are" (p. 40). Letting go is a practice of not attaching to thoughts, pleasant or unpleasant. Clinging to perceived notions of "right" or "wrong" can limit an educator's ability to see current possibilities or opportunities. Holding on to expectations of a finished product is counterproductive to exploration because a finished product becomes unchangeable. Ideas take time to sprout and grow. Like watering a seed that takes root, educators who initiate exploration can let go and foster student creativity, trusting the process to "work its

magic" (Gilpatrick, 2009, p. 25). In the classroom, this means being flexible and asking questions to encourage and guide students to try their ideas, which helps foster deeper understanding. Letting go also involves accepting the uncomfortable stages and the often-messy, non-linear progress of exploration.

Developing Mindfulness

When educators model the behavior and speech that connects their students to each other and the world they live in, it prepares these students to function in society and develop empathy and compassion for themselves and others. The pillars of mindfulness equip educators with these skills and further their ability to create positive, life-changing musical experiences for their students. However, mindfulness requires practice, like any other skill. The instructions are simple, and the practices do not require a great deal of time, but they do require regular engagement to become a habit. Following are two daily practices that increase mindfulness in users' personal as well as professional lives.

Push the Pause Button

Taking brief pauses during the day allows the mind to reset, gives the body opportunities to release tension, and provides moments to check in with thoughts and emotions. The practice can be done in three breaths or, if time allows, can be extended to a few minutes. To begin, simply sit tall and, if you wish, close your eyes. Give yourself a few moments to relax into stillness, and then allow your attention to move through your body, noticing the sensations present. Next, notice how you feel and observe the thoughts traveling through your mind. Finally, let your attention rest on your breath. Just take one breath at a time, watching each one come and go. When your mind wanders off, just bring it back to your breath. Stay there, feeling your breath move through your body. When you are ready, open your eyes and return to what you were doing.

Live Each Moment

In a documentary on mindfulness, Kabat-Zinn exclaimed: "These moments aren't little ... they're life!" (as cited in Grubin, 1993). The past is gone, and the future is not written—the present moment is where life is actually taking place. To practice showing up for more moments of life, pause what you are doing and shift your attention to your senses. This practice can be done in stillness, but you can

just as easily do this in the middle of an activity, such as on a run, in a meeting, or after you climb into bed at night. See what you notice as you explore your senses. What do you feel under your feet or in your hands? What do you see? What do you smell? Notice how it feels to be right where you are and not lost in thought, even if it lasts only an instant. Developing the ability to experience more moments in life heightens your potential to be present in the classroom, show up for your students, and be sensitive to their needs.

Conclusion

As you become accustomed to these practices, you might start to notice moments when you use a slow, deep breath to let go of judgment before speaking to a student. You might recognize the tightness in your chest and actively let go of anxiety, find yourself calmly trusting in the learning process, or letting go of self-doubt and breathing into acceptance. Each moment you are fully present is one more moment you are living your life. Right here, right now. The possibilities for you and your students are waiting. ■

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To Be, To See, and Be Free

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ABSTRACT

When does stillness meet sound? How do we balance structure with free expression? In this article, the author explores the use of centering movement and vocal exercises in community as a source for creativity and improvisation. She details elemental techniques that provide a foundation for extending intrapersonal musical experiences within the Orff Schulwerk circle.

By Kerri Lynn Nichols

Movement and sound—these simple elements of the evolution of creation—Nature—are the source of human intelligence, knowing, communication, learning and development, meaning-making, creative artfulness, and all that these spawn in the Nature–human–culture interrelationship. —Burrill, 2018, para. 1

Have you ever taken a walk through the forest or a busy city and simply noticed the sounds that surround you? Did you stop to listen deeply to the nuances of those sounds and the tapestry they weave? Could you feel the sound vibrations resonating through your body? Everything in the universe is in motion, vibrating at unique frequencies, and these vibrations create sound. The Orff Schulwerk classroom is fertile ground for sound exploration, individually and in community, where we experience the world as sound and find our place in it.

Some structure is helpful for children to create, allowing them to be free in their experimentation with melody, rhythm, form, harmony, and timbre, and to articulate their discoveries and intentions. The experiences described in this article were designed to provide safe spaces for personal growth, challenge, and success while utilizing key elements of the Orff Schulwerk approach—the voice, the body, and the interaction with others in space and time. Exploring the voice as an instrument along with the simple language of dance allows children to focus on the journey over a preconceived destination, following their curiosity over meeting a stated objective and realizing intrinsic affirmation over external assessment.

The Body

When you successfully manage to calm your mind, creativity, new ideas, and solutions to problems might surprisingly appear. —Bačová, 2022, para. 4

Exploring the Breath

Connecting to breath actively and intentionally is a way of connecting to and centering the self (see Figures 1 and 2). Practice slowly inhaling and exhaling through the mouth.

Exercise #1: Breath Variations

- Inhale through the nose for four counts, filling the lungs and diaphragm.
- Hold the breath for four counts, engaging and contracting the core muscles.
- Exhale through the mouth for eight counts. Resist releasing the core until count 8.
- Vary the length of the inhale, hold and exhale.

Exercise #2: Floor Breathing and Alignment

- *Elevator Up and Down:* With your hands, find the spot under the lowest rib. Place a small, hardback book on your belly with the spine resting just below the lowest rib. Inhale, using your core muscles to raise the book (elevator up). Hold the breath, keeping the book up (stopping on the fourth floor). Exhale. Resist letting the book lower until you are at the end of your breath (arriving at the lobby).

- *Darth Vader:* Place your flat palm in front of your mouth, about three inches away. Inhale through your nose and exhale slowly on the “Ah” vowel, creating the Darth Vader sound. Repeat, creating warm air, as though you were fogging up a window. Inhale again, blowing sharp and fast on your palm on the “Oo” vowel, creating cool air.

Figure 2. Breath, Darth Vader.



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Figure 1. Breath, Elevator Up and Down Using Book.



To Be, To See,
and Be Free.

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Figure 3. Head-Tail Pattern, X and Group of I.



Fundamental Movement Patterns

Fundamental patterns are movements all people progress through that wire the central nervous system and coordinate the body. Drawn from the work of Irmgard Bartenieff (Hackney, 2003; Laban/Bartenieff Institute of Movement Studies, 2024), these movements have been adapted for use with children. This sequence of shapes creates full body integration and can be used to calm, center, and energize students. Most effective as floorwork, the exercises can also be performed in a standing or seated position, adapting as necessary.

Exercise #1: Alphabet Snow Angels

- Draw the letter X in the air, then on the floor. Repeat, drawing I, Y, T, Y, V, O and C.
- *Core-Distal Pattern:* Lie down on your back and stretch the body into the letter X. Close your eyes. Inhale and exhale using the sound “oo” (as in you), focusing the breath on the lower abdomen. Repeat the exercise, with the following breath variations:
 - “Oh” – reverberate on naval and lower spine.
 - “Ah” – resonate in the upper abdomen and lower ribs.
 - “Eh” – center in the middle chest and thoracic spine.
 - “Ee” – vibrate at the base of the skull.
- *Head-Tail Pattern:* Slide from the X shape to letter I, with arms to sides and legs together. Repeat the sequence (see Figure 3).
- *Upper-Lower Pattern:* Repeat the exercise using letter T (legs together, arms slide on the ground to



Figure 4. Group of T and C, Upper-Lower Pattern.



Figure 5. Core-Distal and Vestibular, Sequence of O.



the horizontal position), letter Y and V (arms slide to sides, legs open to a V shape). Rotate between the letters smoothly, always keeping contact with the ground. Imagine you are making snow angels (see Figure 4, p. 34).

Exercise #2: Ocean Improvisation

- *Core-Distal and Vestibular:* From the letter I, draw your knees up to your core while curling the head and upper spine forward to meet them, like the letter O. Wrap your arms gently around your legs and rock and sway on your back like ocean waves. Keep breathing and make wind and wave sounds as you exhale (see Figure 5).



Figure 6. Humming Allows for Quiet, Personal Exploration.

The Voice

Singing is a very personal experience. Students can be afraid to use their singing voice in public or even at home. If an oboe sounds bad, the reed can be replaced, but the voice is part of the body and must function for a lifetime. Everything affects the voice: stress, sleep, hydration, illness, allergies. Students need acceptance, technique, and validation. Speech is the key, and students need appropriate and intentional time and training of the spoken voice. As students become aware of the prosody of speech, they can begin to transfer it to sung pitches. Speech and singing use different mechanisms in terms of breathing, projection, tone, vibration, placement, resonance, and enunciation, but speech is a portal for finding and embracing one's singing voice.

Students need the opportunity to explore and expand their individual voices before aligning with other voices or an instrument. When working with students who are discovering their singing voice, be sure to use your voice to model the pitch rather than a piano or other instrument because the timbres vary, making it more difficult to match. Singing unaccompanied is a powerful, firsthand experience.



Exercise #1: The Art of Humming

- Humming is an excellent way for students to explore and become aware of their singing voices (Goldman & Goldman, 2017). It allows for quiet, personal exploration (see Figure 6).

- **Consonants:** Experiment with hums using different letters. What do you notice about the vibrations and placement of each? For example, “M”: Say the word “yum” and hold the letter “m.” Feel the buzzing of the lips as you sustain the letter. The tongue rests on the bottom of your mouth. Where do you feel the sound placement in your head or face? What are your lips and tongue doing? Use other words to explore the “m”: glum, tummy (hold the “m” in the middle of the word before saying the “y”), gum (can you hold the hum while chewing?). Explore humming with the following letters: N, Z, TH (as in “the”), and L.
- **Inner Hum:** Hum using NG with mouth open. The back of the tongue touches the soft palette on the roof of the mouth. Bring the tone forward into the face. This helps with clarity of tone and resonance and moves humming towards a sung pitch. Words

to help access this are sing, ring, and ching. Change the vowel in these words and notice how the tone changes: sung, rung, chung.

- **Good Vibrations:** Students sit in self-space and sustain a hum on “m.” Hum a sung pitch, directing students to align with that pitch in unison or harmony. Ask the students to close their eyes and notice if they physically feel the group vibration aligning. Can you describe it? Melt your voice into those around you. If you hear only yourself, you are too loud. If you hear only others, you are not loud enough. Find the balance.

Exercise #2: Vowels

Vowels carry the melody while consonants create the rhythm. All of these experiences work in tandem with the breath. Vary the activities that follow by applying the breathing techniques mentioned earlier.

- **Vowels:** Use the vowel chart to practice vowels (see Figure 7). When we speak, most vowels have two sounds as the mouth opens and closes. Example: O = oh-oo; A = ah-uh; I = ah-ee. Ask students to stay on the initial sound, holding it while the mouth stays open. Ending the tone quickly creates the “ee” sound. Play and improvise with the sequences on the vowel chart: 1-2-3-2-1 or 1-4-7. If a student is comfortable singing in front of the group, ask the student to perform a sequence while the group identifies it using the numbers.
- **Shaping:** Ask students to sustain a vowel and use their hands, arms, or full body to show how it feels in the body. Which vowels are narrow, round, tall, short, open, closed?

Exercise #3: Vocal Explorations

Using the Art Symbol cards (see Figures 8 and 9, p. 37) and the Body Tessitura image (see Figure 10, p. 38):

- **Animal Sounds:** Use combinations of pitch, vowels, consonants, humming, and breath techniques to explore animal sounds: dog, cat, snake, cow, duck, and so forth.
- **Start with Art:** Lines, dots, and symbols can inspire vocal improvisation. Show an example to the students and ask how it might be performed with vowels, consonants, pitch, and vocal sound effects.
- Ask students to create their own “score” with blank cards and markers. Encourage them to keep it simple. Invite them to form pairs or work in small groups to create compositions by sequencing cards. Students not comfortable using their voices may work alone.

Figure 7. Vowel Practice with Numbers.

eh 1	ee 2	ih 3
oh 4	uh 5	ah 6
ă 7	[ʊ] 8	ū 9

eh = set ee = seat ih = sit
 ă = sat [ʊ] = soot ū = suit
 oh = coat uh = cut ah = cot

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Figure 8. Vocal Explorations, Tracing.



Figure 9. Vocal Explorations, Drawing.



Figure 10. Vocal Variations, Body Tessitura.



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- **Body Tessitura:** Vary the use of the vocal cords. Slides, sirens, and yawns allow students to improvise and expand the vocal range. These techniques provide a way to transfer spoken pitch to sung pitch. As high as you can sigh is as high as you can sing.
 - Use the Body Tessitura image to explore different ranges. Example: Low/Chest Voice. Place hands on hips, then the floor, then hips again. As you do this, slide your voice down and up on “Ah” using the lowest range of your voice. Repeat the exercise using the different ranges on the image. Notice the change in placement and breath as you slide up and down through the breaks.

Figure 11. Pitch Practice.

Same pitch: I saw a penguin on a hill and waved to say hello.

Change #1: I saw a _____ on a hill and waved to say hello.
penguin

Change #2: _____ waved
I saw a _____ on a hill and _____ to say hello.
penguin

- Place two fingers across the front of neck over the vocal cords. Quietly say a tongue twister in the lowest speaking range possible. Notice how much vibration you feel on the cords. Repeat, speaking in a middle range and then a very high range. Does the placement or amount of vibration change?
- Sustain a vowel in your lowest speaking voice, then morph the sound into a sung pitch without changing the range. Repeat, in the different ranges. Are you able to pull the sung pitch from the spoken pitch?
- **One Note Song:** Explore melodic improvisation, beginning with one pitch. Each student quietly sings a given phrase on any comfortable pitch. Repeat, but place one word in the phrase on a different pitch (above or below). Practice until it is performed easily. Continue this process, singing most of the phrase on the same pitch, but placing specific words on a different one (see Figure 11). Which words are important? Can you place those on a higher or lower pitch? Note that students can perform this using spoken or sung pitches. These melodies can then be transferred to a pitched instrument.

The Community

An essential element of Orff Schulwerk is working in tandem with others. The approach and process provide opportunities for students to bond as well as nurture internal classroom management. Finding a balance between individual expression and group collaboration is key to creating a safe, supportive, celebratory environment. As some children still might not be comfortable using their singing voice with others, adapt the activities as needed.

Activity #1: Personal Objects

Ask students to bring a small object to class that represents something about themselves. Example:

- A student brings a leaf to show a love of nature. With a partner, or sitting in a circle, each student shares their object and meaning with the group. Direct the group to listen intently and support the student who is sharing. Give each student a turn to share. Extension: Later, point to a student and ask the class what object was shared and its meaning. Balancing sound and silence, this activity nurtures listening skills and non-verbal recognition and the value of each student.

Activity #2: Five A's of Audience

As a rule, in the classroom use the Five A's structure (Nichols, 2016) to help students create a safe environment for exploration and performance. Be willing to stop the class and review these if they are not evident in student behavior.

- **Attend:** Give full attention to the performance with eyes, ears, and body language.
- **Allow:** Allow performers to try new things and succeed or encounter challenges. This is particularly important in intermediate and middle school grades, where cliques can be prevalent. *Allow* nurtures equality and recognition.
- **Appreciate:** Students display an inner understanding and empathy for those performing in front of their peers.
- **Applaud:** This is the outer expression of *Appreciate*. Clapping lets the performers know the audience is grateful for the sharing and effort.
- **Affirm:** After a performance, audience members may share positive feedback related to the musical content. Instead of "That's awesome!" say, "I noticed the use of different levels in your dance piece." Audience members can also ask questions about the creative choices made or next steps, revisions, or extensions.

Activity #3: Everyday Actions

Brainstorm everyday actions, such as walk, stretch, sit, write, look, and their variations. Make the action bigger, smaller, faster, slower, or adapt in another way.

Activity #4: Partner Play

Enhance non-verbal leadership skill and silent connections between students with silent games.

- **Mirror, Mirror:** Face a partner or the teacher. Partner one moves in self-space and partner two matches/copies the movement. Switch roles. To be a good leader, move slowly and make sure your partner can match you at the same time. The teacher should not be able to tell who the leader is.
- **Shadow Me:** Repeat *Mirror, Mirror* except Partner One travels through general space and Partner Two follows. Turn around to change the leader.
- **Sculptor and Clay:** Partner One (clay) makes a shape and Partner Two (sculptor) changes that shape by moving body parts without speaking. This can be done without touching, by simply indicating with motion around the clay.

Activity #5: Listening Variations

- **Inner Hearing:** Ask students to sing a known tune quietly in unison. As the teacher's hands are opening, students sing outwardly. As the teacher's hands are closing, students sing inwardly (silently). Start with regular phrasing, and progress to random changes. The goal is to track the sound while thinking it.
- **Silent Movement Translation:** Students observe while one person performs a simple, short, and silent movement sequence. Individuals must translate the silent movement sequence (rhythm, tempo, levels, etc.) into sound, using the voice, instruments, or body percussion. Repeat the game in reverse: Start with sound and move to silence.
- **Sound Memory:** Play a folk-dance recording with a clear steady pulse, simple melody, and regular phrases. Ask students to perform different activities to the recording: Walk the beat, keep the pulse with body percussion, play a percussion instrument to various pulse durations (e.g., quarter note, half note, eighth notes). Later during the class period, ask students if they can hum the tune, pat the pulse, and perform the phrasing without hearing the recording.

Activity #6: Harmonize

- **Sound Alignment:** One person hums a pitch, and everyone matches it. Take turns with different students choosing the pitch. Ask students to align their voices with others.
- **Chords:** Ask students to close their eyes. Play a chord on a keyboard. Students listen to the chord and hum a pitch they hear in the chord. Ask, "Can you hum a different pitch in the chord?"
- **No Fault Harmony:** This activity (Page, 2001) helps students find common tones between chords. Students close their eyes. Teacher plays a slow, simple progression (I-IV-V) on a keyboard. Students hum a note in the first chord, then either hold that pitch for the second chord, or change their pitch if it no longer sounds good to them. Humming quietly allows each student to explore harmony safely.

Activity #7: Volume Resources

The *Music for Children* volumes are full of exercises that can be used to inspire personal exploration, improvisation, and composition. Volume I (Orff & Keetman, 1958) has multiple examples of rhythms, melodies, and elemental forms that students can

Figure 12. Rhythm Score



- Ask students to create a simple gesture or compose or improvise a movement sequence using the entire rhythmic phrase or one measure.
- Beginning with measure one, inhale and exhale in the rhythm.
- Choose a consonant for humming (N, M or NG) and hum the rhythm on one note. Repeat the exercise using vowel sounds. Explore using different vocal ranges.
- Use plosive consonants to perform the rhythm. Combine with spoken vowel sounds.
- Sing or speak the rhythm on one pitch, performing one note in the sequence on a different pitch.

SOURCE: CREATED BY KERRI LYNN NICHOLS.

use as a framework for music and movement pieces. Rhythms and melodies to be completed (Volume I, pp. 64–66 and 79–81, respectively) and canon exercises (p. 91) are simple starting points for the activities previously described. Figure 12 shows some options using an original rhythm in the style of *Music for Children*.

Conclusion

Out of movement, music—out of music, dance. — Dorothee Günther (as cited in Twittenhoff, 1935)

We live in a society that emphasizes doing over being. Children are often scheduled like adults: soccer on Monday, piano on Tuesday, study group on Wednesday. There is little, if any, time to sit and daydream, to do nothing, doodle on a page, stare out

the window, or play outside. Yet with intention, we notice opportunities to listen to the sounds around us, to go deeper in our perception and take note of the less obvious vibrations beneath the surface. Providing experiences for students to create with voice and movement helps them become more attuned to how stillness frames and shapes the sounds we hear and create. We often mistake the inner work, stillness or inactivity, for a lack of participation, awareness, or learning. Nurturing children in developing their own sense of stillness in our sound-filled universe is crucial, however, to building a sustainable future where humans interact peacefully with the vibrations of others in this world of sound and silence. ■

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Join the Conversation ...

“Responding” is part of the National Core Arts Standards for music. To whom and to what are students responding in our classrooms? How are we guiding them to do this thoughtfully, artistically, and kindly? And what role does responding play in our own lives as Orff Schulwerk educators today?

We wonder:

- How might students learn to respond to themselves, artistic works, one another, and their world?
- How might we generate a musical product in response to a non-musical subject?
- How do we respond to conflict within our classrooms, schools, and communities?
- In what ways might Orff Schulwerk practitioners respond to the various technologies students use to create music?
- What is it like to be culturally responsive in the face of social and systemic issues we and our students face today?
- How can we use Orff Schulwerk processes to respond to community needs, in addition to engaging with parents/caregivers and school administration?
- How are teachers from different regions, communities, or identities responding to the work we are doing in AOSA? Teachers who have not yet become involved?
- How are Orff Schulwerk practices responding as music education practices continue to evolve?

In *The Orff Echo* Summer 2025 issue, we seek a lively conversation around what it means to Respond. Look for the official call for submissions in AOSA news and in your Membership Essentials email, August 2024.



American Orff-Schulwerk Association



Radical Being: Existing Freely in the Music Classroom

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ABSTRACT

Every music classroom is filled with an eclectic, diverse mix of young musicians. In this article, the author presents the philosophical framework of radical being. In conjunction with Orff Schulwerk, radical being fosters a culture of deep belonging in the music classroom.

By Adam VanPelt

While sitting in a circle with a group of 6-year-olds, working tirelessly to teach them a song about bumblebees, it occurred to me that people are out in the world right now working tirelessly to fight injustice. Although I love singing songs about bumblebees with the children, I wonder if I am making a difference.

Our students, our classrooms, and our music are all within our reach. In our time together, we have the distinct opportunity, no matter how brief it might be, to make a difference for our students. We are responsible for ensuring each and every student feels like they belong in our classrooms. We have the power to enact *radical being*, a three-tenet educational philosophy I developed that encapsulates the whole child. In conjunction with Orff Schulwerk, radical being allows children's elemental nature to shine and provides them a sanctuary in the music classroom.

Radical Me

The idea of radical being stems from reflection on my lived experience as a gay man. Though I might be out and proud, I find that this marginalized aspect of my identity has faded into my subconscious. When I look in the mirror, I do not see *gay me*, I just see *me*. In the same vein, the oppression I face as a gay man does the same. My constant underlying fear has become so foundational to who I am that I seldom process it. Having grown numb to my oppression, I often fail to acknowledge my persistent fear.



SOURCE: WWW.ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/PROKSIMA

Queer people are wary of being open with their identities (Rostosky et al., 2022). When meeting somebody new, instinctively I hide my identity until I know I am safe. My mannerisms, vocabulary, and any discussion of my personal life are all guarded. I search for pronouns in someone’s email signature or a rainbow banner on their social media. Upon finding these small affirmations of support, I feel *safe*.

As a growing boy who often failed to fit in, I felt subtle discomfort and a disconnect from other boys because I was not particularly masculine. I think about the peculiar looks my teachers and peers gave me when I shared a unique interest. Although no instances of acute oppression stand out from my formative years, my childhood feels marred by a tension between who I am *supposed to be* and who I *am*. Even now, I feel a constant nagging burden in relation to my identity. Radical being developed one night when thinking about my childhood and the

fear I feel to this day. I am tired of this. I want to be open about my identity in any space. Thinking back to 9-year-old me, what do I wish the adults in my life had done differently? What did I need to feel like I had a right to exist in a certain space? When and where did I feel like I belonged?

After contemplating these questions, I started to consider my diverse group of students. What must they feel like? Are they feeling now what I felt when I was their age? What can I do to keep that from happening? My answer was radical being, a framework for teachers to use to leverage their power and remove barriers from their classrooms—a framework that allows students to *be* wholeheartedly.

Radical Being

Radical being is a mindset that educators adopt in regard to the students they teach. The term *radical* is often associated with extremism or revolution; here it

means fundamental or absolute. *Being* refers to both the individual and the existence of said individual.

Radical being is grounded in post-structuralism, namely queer theory. Queer theory is a social theory that calls into question what is normal and challenges the binaries that are ever-present in our society (Pennell, 2022). Though rooted in gender and sexuality, queer theory can be used as a framework for critiquing and dismantling social constructs (Ingrey, 2018). The versatility of queer theory makes it a compelling basis for radical being. Meyer (2007) wrote, “Queer theory offers educators a lens through which educators can transform their praxis so as to explore and celebrate the tensions and new understandings created by teaching new ways of seeing the world” (p.16). Questioning and challenging normalities is quintessential in radical being, whether in regard to gender, sexuality, race, ability, or any other aspect of one’s identity.

Radical being pushes educators to tear down the unnecessary, harmful structures in their classrooms that might prevent students from feeling a sense of belonging. Rationally speaking, teachers do not have the power to completely dismantle the harmful systems that plague the lives of their marginalized students. Teachers can, however, open up a world of possibilities for their students, expanding their minds and pushing the limits of what the students think is possible (Clements, 2023). When students walk into our classrooms, they should feel as though a weight is lifted off their shoulders. They should know they are in the right place and they have unlimited potential.

Embracing Radical Being

Radical being is not an instructional system to be applied in the classroom; it is a philosophical approach to teaching, much like Orff Schulwerk (Shamrock, 1997). There is no specific template for a radical being mindset. Instead, three essential tenets define it: *active cognizance*, *vulnerable reflection*, and *unconditional love*. These tenets must be omnipresent in the classroom and within each educator. Applied cyclically, they provide a framework that shapes the teacher’s mindset, fostering a classroom environment that evolves as necessary. Radical being can be adopted by any educator and will interconnect particularly well with Orff Schulwerk practitioners.

At its core, radical being is an ideal we strive to achieve for all of our students. Radical being is a framework for challenging ourselves to identify our own biases, confront the notion of what is normal and

good, and dismantle harmful barriers that prevent our students from feeling a sense of belonging (Cobb & Krownapple, 2019). The philosophical considerations of the three tenets that follow are provided as a guide for educators to shape the way they interact with others, both in and out of the music classroom.

Active Cognizance

Active cognizance begins by identifying our own biases. We must start by recognizing and embracing—being *cognizant* of—the personal biases we hold, relative to race, gender, sexuality, religion, ethnicity, and/or ability. The idea of embracing does not imply that we should continue to perpetuate our biases, but that we should recognize the origins. We must look back on everything we have learned up until this point, discerning what has been harmful, and then do our best to acknowledge and unlearn.

Active cognizance delves even further than unlearning our biases. The *active* aspect is of the utmost importance, as it dictates that our cognizance is continuously evolving. As our society changes and grows, so do our students. We must, for our entire lives, be present in these changes. This is what fuels the cyclical nature of radical being. Music education professor Marissa Silverman (2022) wrote,

[Students] are not fixed beings, with fixed identities, interests, habits, hopes, and dreams. Instead, when teachers engage with students and recognize their in-flux natures, they imagine the possibilities of tomorrow, of dreaming for the world they hope to live in. (p. 8)

Active cognizance requires teachers to acknowledge and embrace continuously the intricacies of their students.

Vulnerable Reflection

The most critical aspect of radical being comes with vulnerable reflection. After educators identify and recognize their biases, they must reflect on *why* they hold these biases. They must get to the root of the problem and begin the process of unlearning. This reflection takes great humility and vulnerability (Thomas et al., 2018). Vulnerable reflection requires an open mind and a willingness to (un)learn. The process can lead to a deep philosophical dive into the rationale behind pedagogy, social interaction, musical structures, and human behavior.

When considering the structures of the music classroom, teachers must reflect on foundational questions in order to analyze meaning within certain systems. For the music classroom, these questions might include or be related to the following:

- What is normal? Why?
- How might normalities harm students? How might they benefit students?
- Which structures are helpful and to which students?
- What can I do to guide students without constraining them?
- In the music room, what does success look like to me? What might it look like to them?
- When do students feel most liberated in my classroom?

These are just a few questions that can inspire some vulnerable reflection, but this is certainly not an exhaustive list. Each educator has their own strengths and areas for growth. The vulnerability comes from a willingness to explore the known areas for growth and to uncover new ones. Vulnerable

Love is at the core of music education—love for our students, love for our craft, and love for our music.

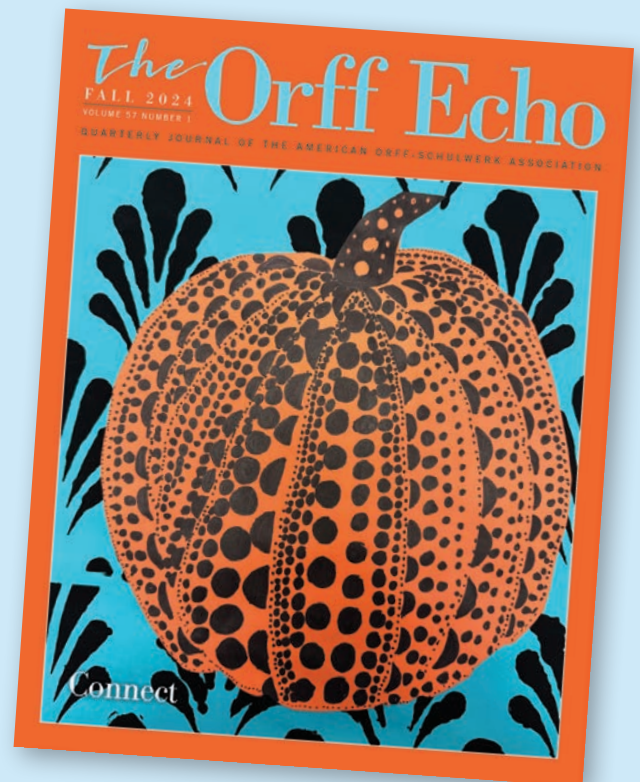
reflection leads to challenging, or even dismantling, the harmful systems it helps teachers identify within the classroom. As teachers, we hold power over our students. Our power uniquely positions us to bring transformative change to our students' learning and their lives (Love, 2019).

Unconditional Love

Each educator is different, but I would argue that *love* is the very foundation and the ultimate driving force behind not only radical being but behind everything we do as educators. Love is at the core of music education—love for our students, love for our craft, and love for our music. Speaking personally, I can say that love is what brings me back to the classroom every single day. With love comes connection, community, and joy.

Connect

Connections are essential to the Orff Schulwerk approach. We enable our students to make meaningful, life-long connections with their peers, connect various approaches for musical learning, and build community by honoring cultures within diverse populations. In addition to being a valued principle of Orff Schulwerk, connection is an integral part of the National Core Arts Standards in music alongside performing, responding, and creating. Look for the Fall 2024 issue, "Connect," to discover what connection looks like in Orff Schulwerk settings!



Radical being requires significant personal and social criticality. Undoubtedly, difficult moments will surface during the self-reflection process. Critical work can be draining and discouraging. What brings us back from these struggles is the unconditional love we hold for our students and our work. Our love for our students must be unconditional in order to foster an environment of radical being. Ghody Muhammad (2023) wrote, “If we do not love ourselves or love all our children, we will find no method, theory, or strategy to overcome pedagogical struggles” (p. 94). This unconditional love must extend to every student, whether it is reciprocated or not. We must love our students for every aspect of *who they are*. We must not try to impart our ideals upon them, but liberate them from the constraints to which they are constantly subjected. This work is difficult, it is draining, it is humbling—our unconditional love is what keeps us on track because radical being is what our students deserve.

An Orff Schulwerk classroom lends itself to the mindset of radical being, as the approach encourages students to be creative, take risks, and put their voices into the room.

Connecting to Orff Schulwerk

Radical being aligns seamlessly with the Orff Schulwerk approach, as Orff Schulwerk is foundationally student-centered (Sebring & Petersen, 2020). Frazee (2006) wrote, “[The Orff Schulwerk classroom] is a place where self-expression is encouraged and valued, musical experiments are carried out, and tolerance for differing views is practiced” (p. 18). An Orff Schulwerk classroom lends itself to the mindset of radical being, as the approach encourages students to be creative, take risks, and put their voices into the room. As teachers, it is our job to embrace student ideas and build on them. This is the point where I personally begin to struggle. When our students take music in a less conventional direction, we often redirect them back into the confines of our own musical minds (Thornton & Hess, 2023). Though these parameters might sound good to our Western music-attuned ears, redirecting our students in such a manner could limit their potential.

The very nature of music in an Orff Schulwerk setting is elemental. Orff (1963) wrote about the elemental music created in an Orff Schulwerk classroom: “Elemental music ... lacks great form, it contents itself with simple sequential structures, ostinatos,

and miniature rondos. It is earthy, natural, almost a physical activity. It can be learned and enjoyed by anyone” (p. 72). Orff embraced the innate nature of the music children make, and Keetman (1970) wrote the following regarding movement improvisation: “There is some music that evokes a spontaneous movement response. It is mostly an unconscious motivation that is thus appealed to that is, particularly in a child, as yet untrained. This unconscious motivation should be fostered and encouraged” (p. 163). The elemental aspects of the music should be embraced, with students’ musical instincts at the core.

Due to the philosophical nature of Orff Schulwerk, educators have the autonomy to adapt their instruction in a variety of ways (Brown & Hawley, 2020). For instance, elementary music teacher Patrick Hughes (2023) explored a variety of singing techniques and the connections different techniques have with different genres of music. He stated, “Many opportunities are at our disposal to teach students about all their voices can do, while at the same time empowering them to see themselves as singers and not someone whose voice does not fit the ideal” (p. 14). Hughes advocated for honoring the individuality of each student, while still guiding them towards their desired musical destination.

The Orff Schulwerk approach is centered on the students. They are the impetus behind all of the music created in the Orff Schulwerk classroom. Children’s perceptions of the world are starkly different from our own. Each child has an individual, complex, intersectional identity. Every one of our students can offer a unique perspective along with fresh minds, eyes, and ears. As facilitators, it is our job to honor their voices and musicianship to the utmost degree. As Keetman (1970) noted:

There will always be children who, in their carefree way, particularly enjoy moving freely, and who have an enlightening effect on other children. They also are mostly not afraid to move by themselves into a company, their dance with singing. They forget the world around them and are completely absorbed in their dance. (p. 163)

Music educators must aim to cultivate this freedom in *all* students—they should feel liberated in our spaces. The goal of radical being is to forge this freedom in every child in the music classroom. A background in Orff Schulwerk prepares us to unearth and embrace the radical being in each of them.

Conclusion

Radical being is not a simple lesson plan or a quick checklist for teachers to use to create a more welcoming classroom environment. Radical being is a mindset, an ideal that teachers strive to impart to their students. Educators who embrace the mindset of radical being will constantly challenge themselves

to question their beliefs and practices. Philosophical, pedagogical, and personal growth are all inherent aspects of a radical being mindset. By fostering an environment of radical being in our classrooms, we empower our students to *be*. Doing right by our students is paramount. Keep singing about the bumblebees. ■

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The Power of Observation to Foster Cultural Responsiveness

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AMY MELTON is a PhD student at the University of Texas at Austin studying music and human learning. She previously taught for four years at a multi-ethnic public school in the Atlanta area. Amy is a member of AOSA and specializes in researching the experiences of student immigrants and their music teachers.

ABSTRACT

Culturally responsive practices continue to increase in popularity with music teachers. Much of the conversation about these practices centers on what culturally responsive teachers do. In this article, the author discusses how, in addition to creating appropriate lessons, music teachers can foster culturally responsive dispositions by developing reflexive awareness of their own cultures and by observing students to understand theirs.

By Amy Melton

While student teaching, I excitedly presented a movement activity passed down to me by a mentor teacher. In this lesson, I explained the history of *Pictures at an Exhibition* and informed my students that we would pretend to be in an art museum, where half of us promenaded around the gallery while the other half posed as statues. The promenading students would pause to mirror a statue of their choice, causing the posing student to unfreeze and promenade around the room. I remember feeling confused when some students required additional explanation before understanding the activity. My music education professor happened to be observing me that day, and during our debrief she asked me a question: “Do you even know if these kids have been to an art museum?” In that moment, I was surprised to discover the possibility that some children have never visited a museum and realized my lack of knowledge about students’ backgrounds had diminished the effectiveness of my instruction.

Since then, culturally responsive teaching has grown in prominence in music education, and music educators are becoming more aware of its importance (e.g., Bond, 2017; Gay, 2002; McCoy & Lind, 2022; Shaw 2015, 2016). The Orff Schulwerk approach lends itself toward facilitating culturally responsive education. In a recent mixed-methods study, Kikoler (2022) found that teachers



SOURCE: WWW.ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/MELITAS

who had completed advanced AOSA Levels felt significantly more confident incorporating culturally responsive education than teachers who had completed fewer of these courses. Similarly, Kikoler found “[e]very interview respondent indicated that [culturally responsive education] is naturally embedded into the Orff Schulwerk approach” (pp. 121–122). Many elementary music teachers now consider the culture of their students when curating curricula, and they rely on resources from AOSA for planning culturally diverse lessons (American Orff-Schulwerk Association, 2015) and selecting songs without problematic histories (American Orff-Schulwerk Association, n.d.).

Although much of the conversation about culturally responsive teaching centers on what teachers *do*, the practice encompasses more than behavior alteration. Cultural responsiveness is, at its core, a facet of teacher disposition. I propose that educators can learn how to be culturally responsive not only by researching new lesson plans, but also by fostering in-the-moment

awareness while teaching and by intentionally reflecting on their interactions with students.

Fostering a Reflexive Disposition

Experienced teachers carry themselves in a manner that differs from novice teachers. They have a certain presence, an ability to guess what will happen next, and a propensity for noticing otherwise overlooked behaviors—in other words, experienced teachers demonstrate a particular temperament, which could be described as a disposition. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, a disposition is a “natural tendency or bent of the mind, *esp.* in relation to moral or social qualities; mental constitution or temperament” (Oxford English Dictionary, 2023, emphasis in original). Culturally responsive teachers are those who not only plan diverse activities, but also demonstrate a tendency towards learning about their learners and reflecting on how student cultures differ from their own. Although cultural reflection comes naturally to

Figure 1. Questions that Encourage Reflexivity.

What values did my family impart to me? To what degree do I agree with those values as an adult? How do my values compare with those of my students?
What role does extended family play in my life? How does this compare with the role of extended family for my students?
What genres of music did I grow up listening to? How does this compare with the music my students listen to?
What background knowledge do I assume that students should know before they enter my classroom? Do my students come to class with this background knowledge?
Is there anything about my students' cultures that makes me feel uncomfortable? Why do I feel this way?
In what way are students' childhoods similar to mine? In what ways are their childhoods different from mine?

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some teachers, others must intentionally foster these skills. Fortunately, many elements of good teaching overlap with being culturally sensitive (Ladson-Billings, 1995), which means teachers likely and instinctively exhibit some elements of cultural responsiveness. I believe all teachers, regardless of natural inclination, can foster a more intentional reflexive disposition that strengthens their cultural responsiveness.

Reflexivity refers to an awareness of personal backgrounds or beliefs and how previous experiences influence interpretation of interactions with others (Saldaña & Omasta, 2022). As teachers, to understand what assumptions we bring to the classroom, we first need to reflect on our own culture to determine how our personal experiences compare with those of our students (see Figure 1). For example, we might ask ourselves: “What cultural values did my family emphasize, and how have these values affected me as an adult?” “What genres do I prefer, and how does this affect my lesson planning?” “What background knowledge might I assume students should know without direct instruction?” Other questions to consider are: “Do I feel comfortable with my students’ cultures, or do I feel distinctly different from them?” and “Can I relate to students from personal experience, or do I

lack contextual knowledge to understand the stories they tell me?” Developing reflexive awareness can be a struggle, because personal values and cultures are so embedded in everyday life. On the positive side, a moment of discord can help provide reflexive clarity.

One such event occurred during orientation for my first teaching job, which was at an exceptionally diverse school with a small population of White students. I became uncomfortable when, looking through the welcome packet, I noticed the school mascot’s skin was much darker than mine. When reflecting on the reason for my discomfort, it occurred to me this was the first time I had encountered an institutional mascot that did not look like me. I thought about how this discomfort might be common for my friends of other ethnicities and considered what it would be like to not feel represented by the institutions meant to include me.

When diverse people work together, feelings of discomfort are inevitable. Culturally responsive teachers do not proudly assert their preferences in these situations. Instead, they humbly acknowledge their discomfort and reflect on what the emotional tension teaches them about their cultural values and the experiences of those around them.

Educators might also notice feelings of bias or discrimination while teaching students who are different from them. Perhaps a student’s mannerisms, appearance, or attire expose a presupposition in the teacher’s own thinking, or perhaps a student fits a stereotype the teacher holds. At first, articulating these feelings can be difficult. As teachers intentionally become aware of their thought patterns over time,

Balancing time spent observing students and learning about their cultures with time spent learning from resources and professional development helps clarify the relevancy of suggested activities.

they begin to notice the outward manifestations of bias, such as treating certain students differently than others or jumping to conclusions about their motivations or character.

In my first few years of teaching, I was surprised to realize how many culturally charged assumptions I carried. Generally, I considered myself to be understanding and supportive of people who were different from me, and many of these thoughts had never previously risen to my conscious awareness. Although we would never want these discriminatory thoughts to remain in our minds, these “triggering” moments are a gift. They expose areas of bias in our thinking and enable us to hold ourselves accountable, rejecting these feelings and recommitting ourselves to the equitable treatment of all students. By doing so, we become more culturally responsive in disposition by being reflexive about our reactions to student behavior.

The Power of Observation

One of a teacher’s most powerful tools is observation. By observing students, teachers determine their progress, their areas of weakness, their social development, and their needs. One might even argue that experienced teachers are professional “noticers.” Why is it, then, that most of the conversation about cultural responsiveness centers not on noticing student culture but on planning curriculum? Notably, planning activities that represent students and expose them to new cultures is vital to the classroom, and learning from culture bearers of other nations provides valuable insight.

Although external experts guide understanding, the best way to learn about students specifically is from the students themselves. Insights from expert resources should augment what teachers are already learning by observing their students and interacting with them. Balancing time spent observing students

and learning about their cultures with time spent learning from resources and professional development helps clarify the relevancy of suggested activities. Still, the question remains: What should teachers be looking for while observing their students?

Observing the Five Rs

Saldaña and Omasta (2022) described a framework teachers can use to organize their observations of students. Originally used with qualitative researchers, this framework delineates the social world into the elements of routines, roles, relationships, rules, and rituals (see Figure 2). This framework, called the “Five Rs” consists of the categories that follow.

1. Routine

A *routine* is a repetitive, habitual action that individuals perform during everyday life. In an elementary music room, teachers structure their classes around a set of routines. They ask students to walk to a steady beat, dance within familiar folk dance formations, remove bars from xylophones and glockenspiels, or improvise in a pentatonic scale.

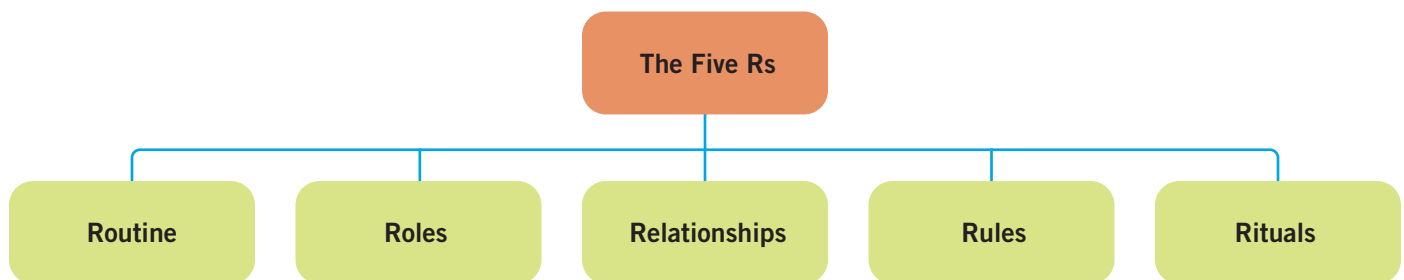
2. Roles

People function within different *roles* as they interact with each other, and these roles change depending on the surrounding circumstances. Students and teachers fulfill different roles in the classroom, and these roles can change depending on the activity. Though teachers create the lesson plans and guide students through instruction, roles can be switched as students become the teachers when contributing musical ideas for the class to pursue together.

3. Relationships

Between individuals, *relationships* form. Whether positive or negative, these relationships often arise

Figure 2. The Five Rs Framework, Saldaña and Omasta (2022).



SOURCE: CREATED BY AMY MELTON.

Figure 3. The Five Rs – Examples in the Classroom.

The Five Rs	Example in the Classroom
Routine	Removing bars from xylophones and glockenspiels, improvising in a pentatonic scale, mirroring another student's movement
Roles	Students learning from teachers, students leading others in group composition, students sharing their cultural knowledge with teachers
Relationships	Fostering relationships between teacher and students, fostering relationships between students
Rules	Playing instruments at the appropriate time, selecting appropriate movement during improvisation, treating students respectfully
Rituals	Singing Happy Birthday to classmates, thanking a folk dance partner for the dance, clapping after a student's solo

SOURCE: CREATED BY AMY MELTON.

due to the roles people fill. As teachers and students engage in the routines and roles of the classroom, their relationships with others develop. Students forge stronger relationships with each other by composing music in a group or by mirroring another's movements. Teachers grow closer to students by learning about their musical interests or by calling them by name.

4. Rules

Social norms dictate the *rules* of interaction and influence the way individuals fill their roles and operate in relationship with one another. Although individuals sometimes communicate rules explicitly, rules are often unspoken and implicitly understood between individuals. All individuals operate within a structure of rules that shape their understanding of which behaviors are acceptable in a music class, including how to work in a group and which movements are appropriate during improvisation.

5. Ritual

A *ritual* is an act, whether individual or communal, that carries symbolic cultural meaning to the people involved. Teachers create rituals that engender a sense of community among students. They sing *Happy Birthday* to their peers, thank their folkdance partners, and clap wildly when a fellow student sings a solo for the first time. These are examples of rituals that hold meaning for everyone involved (see Figure 3).

Engaging the Five Rs

Music teachers engage students in each element of this framework, even if they have never considered how

the Five Rs affect their classroom culture. Students also engage in the Five Rs in ways specific to their cultures. Though their cultural experiences exist beyond the bounds of the school day, students bring their backgrounds to the classroom. Each culture is valuable and unique, and teachers can learn about students by observing them in the classroom. In an article in *The Orff Echo*, Jones (2022) described her process of collecting folk songs from students and stated, "Practitioners of the Schulwerk embrace collaboration rather than the hierarchy of teacher-as-authority, and many teachers view themselves as lifelong learners alongside their students" (p. 11).

We learn from students by noticing the rituals they mention about their home lives, such as attending a *quinceañera* (a celebration of a girl's 15th birthday, common in Mexican and other Latin American cultures), gathering weekly with extended family, or attending language school on Saturdays. Similarly, we learn from students by noticing the relationships and routines they describe. These can be relationships with family or neighbors or routines like attending soccer practice, spending time with friends, or babysitting siblings. Students, especially elementary-age students, love to share stories about their lives. What kinds of stories do they tell, and what do teachers learn about them from these stories? When they share a story in class, does anyone else nod and say, "Me too"? What does this expression of agreement convey about the possible shared culture among students?

Similarly, teachers gain greater understanding about students by noticing how they engage with the Five Rs in their classrooms. Though less obvious than

formal holidays or religions, cultural differences arise in the way students assign leadership roles during group work activities, how they relate to their friends, which activities they prefer over others, or their social mannerisms in a class setting. Students approach activities with differing views about the rules of what is socially appropriate—assumptions that could possibly stem from their cultural backgrounds. It is important for teachers to avoid over-generalizing when observing indicators of culture, because students from the same nation do not necessarily experience all facets of their culture the same way. Over time, an understanding will develop as to which facets groups of students share and which are specific to their personalities or families.

Though perhaps less common, the rules that guide a student's behavior might clash with the assumed rules of the music classroom. For example, during a creative movement activity, one of my students—who was raised in a certain Christian denomination—appeared uncomfortable. Although she did not mention this overtly, her body language clearly indicated her uneasiness. When we spoke privately, she shared that her church does not believe in dancing. In this case, I had observed this student's response to a classroom routine and was able to

take appropriate action to accommodate her cultural needs.

Conclusion

As teachers who seek to be culturally responsive, we must move beyond incorporating only surface-level elements of student culture into curriculum. According to Jones (2022), “By embracing the concepts of cultural humility and culturally responsive teaching, we keep our focus on *who* is being taught, as well as *what* is being taught” (p. 15, emphasis in original). In our efforts to be strategic in choosing culturally appropriate activities, we must also foster reflexive habits by becoming aware of how our personal cultures affect our teaching habits and how we tend to navigate cultural differences with our students.

We can strengthen our skills of observation in the classroom by noticing how students describe the routines, roles, relationships, rules, and rituals present in their lives outside of the school context, and by analyzing how they engage within this framework in the music classroom. Knowing more about our students' lives equips us to create more meaningful lessons and to support them not only through our curriculum choices, but also through a supportive teacher disposition. ■

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Be Silly: Embracing Humor and Play in the Music Classroom

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JODY PETTER is a kindergarten through Grade 5 music specialist in Apple Valley, Minnesota. She earned her master's degree in music education with an Orff Schulwerk concentration from the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota, studied at the Orff Institute in Salzburg, and has completed two levels of Kodály. She has served on the Minnesota Orff Chapter board for 18 years as president, program chair, and is the current past president. She presents at local conferences and is the author of the blog, *Random Acts of Orff*.

ABSTRACT

When we embrace life through the lens of being silly, we escape the mundane and enter a realm of endless possibilities. The Orff Schulwerk classroom serves as an excellent environment for playfulness. In this article, the author explores the use of humor and silliness to align effectively with the play already embedded in Orff Schulwerk and as a tool that can help teachers connect with their students.

By Jody Petter

"In the present environment of high stakes testing, budgetary challenges, increased demands on educators, and competition for students' attention, everyone in the school benefits when humor is part of the pedagogy. Humor builds a learning relationship through the joyful confluence of head and heart." —Elias, 2015

Humor in the music classroom is not about telling jokes—it is about creating an environment or feeling. A growing body of literature details how humor reduces stress and tension in the classroom, improves retention, and promotes creative understanding (e.g., Elias, 2015). Similar to how Orff Schulwerk teachers use improvisation to foster student creativity, using humor offers educators a pathway that makes difficult concepts easy to convey (Goodkin, 2023). In my classroom, I have observed that humor reinforces my efforts to: (1) build a safe environment; (2) create a sense of community and belonging; (3) inspire the imagination; (4) pave the way for improvisation and agency; (5) manage the classroom and enact behavioral norms; and (6) support student self-regulation. Using humor in the classroom can help teachers model curiosity, joy, and laughter while fostering student creativity, engagement, and motivation.

1. Build a Safe Environment

Creating a safe environment for students to learn is one of the first steps in building community. There is a stark distinction between forced fun and a safe space for

actual creative unscripted play. If the teacher shows up as authentic and vulnerable, emotional attunement can be achieved (Korner, 2020). Attunement is the first connection between caregivers and is one of the first forms of play. It is the foundation for emotional self-regulation and is how infants and young children learn to trust. When teachers take the time to decipher students' behaviors from students' points of view, accurate and responsive instruction can ensue. Acknowledging students' emotional states allows teachers to join with them and conveys to students the sense they are with someone similar to them. This translates into feeling liked by that person and liking that person in return. Connections such as this are often challenging for music teachers to attain because of the limited time with students that scheduling provides. Using humor helps overcome this challenge by inspiring more authentic unscripted play.

2. Create a Sense of Community and Belonging

According to Maslow, the need to belong is more important than safety and physiological needs (Pichère & Cadiat, 2015). Educators can establish clear expectations and rules that promote empathy, understanding, acceptance, and respect. This sets the foundation for a supportive and inclusive community where students feel comfortable taking risks and engaging in social interactions. For instance, in order for the music to resonate with students, a sense of community needs to be present first (Boardman,

2020). Role-playing and modeling appropriate social behaviors can help students understand and practice effective communication, active listening, and conflict resolution (Brunell, 2023).

The impression of “we” in the classroom leads to a sense of belonging and interconnectivity. How can teachers foster play without a prescribed script or sense of what fun should be—play in which they forget time and simply let their students have fun? The need to strive for perfection is a challenge for many musicians as well. How, then, do music teachers navigate perfection in the classroom? How can they allow for mistakes and imperfection while simultaneously seeking to increase productivity, regulation, and the ability to work as a team?

To build community, students and teachers must be engaged in the material and feel as if they are a part of the group. Forging relationships and promoting choice, inclusivity, and ownership are just a few strategies for getting students to embrace what teachers are striving for in the music room. Scholars have documented that using humor in the classroom positively affects students' engagement (Evanick, 2023). Silliness, humor, and play serve as tools that provide a natural means for catching the attention of even the most challenging students. When used effectively, these tools create an opportunity to build a space where students feel safe to ask questions, play, create, and imagine.

I have done this successfully in my classroom by creating a tiny village of Calico Critters™ collected over the years (see Figure 1). Students bring in their

Figure 1. Calico Critters™ “Helping” in an I Spy Activity.



PHOTOGRAPHER: JODY PETER.

Mini Brands to add to our collection, and often they help me hide them and change their location in the room. We use the critters to help demonstrate folk dances and partner games, and they, in turn, “keep track of” the horde of Mini Brands hidden throughout the room. The miniature products transform the room into a giant life-sized game of I Spy, which we play in many ways. We use them frequently during our Dalcroze-inspired Eurhythmics warm-up; students move, typically, to beat-centric improvisational music and have to find the Mini Brands hidden around the room. They are not allowed to talk during this activity and must move, respond, and gesture to match the music. Allowing time for fun in a relaxed environment is an investment that provides a sense of community for all of us and deepens the connection between my students and me.

3. Inspire the Imagination

One of the ways I encourage my students to use their imaginations is with a role play using a character we named Spoonie (see Figure 2). Spoonie was born in an un-named location and was adopted from a local

Figure 2. Spoonie and Family Members Inspire Student-Imagined Stories.



PHOTOGRAPHER: JODY PETTER.

thrift store. Originally purchased so I could point to the board and have students still see without my obstructing their view, this spoon became a community member thanks to some creative second graders. They quickly came up with a name, a backstory describing its family, personality traits, and physical attributes.

Scholars have often studied children’s use of anthropomorphism (attributing human characteristics to non-human others, such as animals, inanimate nature, or technologies), which involves imagining others’ minds and internal states (e.g., UKEssays, 2018). The anthropomorphism that occurs in these situations is likely due to the basic human motivation to understand one’s environment and possess some degree of agency over it (UKEssays, 2018). My students’ anthropomorphism of a simple object allowed them to engage with a stable—albeit imaginary—community member in our classroom, which led to their increased participation. Students imitate and explore as a part of the Orff Schulwerk approach. In my classroom, we find as many ways as possible for students to use their imaginations as well as to bridge to more complex musical experiences.

4. Pave the Way for Improvisation and Agency

Students extended this character by spending time outside the music room to create new family members for Spoonie. One child broke a wooden spoon while cooking at home with a parent and decided that the broken spoon had to become part of our classroom family. Thus Spoon-a-Corn the Unicorn was born. With a little polymer clay and ribbon, this spoon joined our little family. Not long after came Spoon-A-Pig, and Sporkie I and II, who are the family pets. These characters are used now for turn-taking and role play and operate as full members of our musical community. Students improvise made-up voices to narrate, give directions, or read stories to the class, and even use the spoons to provide constructive feedback on our musical performances. This imaginative play, a form of pretending, allows them to practice turn-taking and promotes self-control and regulation. It also allows their voices to be heard as a part of the characters’ narrative (Brown, 2023).

Using pretend characters in the classroom provides students the opportunity to push their creative thinking skills and open their internal universe to others. Each story, adventure, and character they create encourages them to share a small part of

themselves with the world. In the Orff Schulwerk classroom, we use the same process when developing improvisational skills. Our spoon family became another tool for my students to use their imaginations and to improvise and create.

5. Manage the Classroom and Enact Behavioral Norms

Often, students entering my classroom notice that some objects, such as the projector and paper towel dispenser, have “googly eyes.” This silliness has a scientific name known as the “watching eyes effect” (Dear et al., 2019, p. 269). The name suggests that just feeling watched might be enough to make people modify their actions independent of deliberative, explicit, conscious evaluation of the costs and benefits.

Researchers have documented that when people feel they are being seen, they tend to display less anti-social, and more prosocial, behavior (e.g., Dear et al., 2019). Recent trends on TikTok that relate to adding googly eyes to objects also make this idea relevant to current pop culture. In my classroom, the paper towel holder is a kind monster who dislikes germs and is

Figure 3. The Kind Monster Overseeing Students with Its Watchful Eye.



PHOTOGRAPHER: JODY PETTER.

My students’ anthropomorphism of a simple object allowed them to engage with a stable—albeit imaginary—community member in our classroom, which led to their increased participation.

watching to ensure children wash their hands (see Figure 3). The projector has eyes to catch students doing their job when the teacher is not looking.

The watchful eyes are helpful tools for ensuring good hygiene and behavioral accountability. They make classroom management easier because students engage with the characters instead of always having to be reminded.

6. Support Student Self-Regulation

When teaching students self-control and regulation on the barred instruments, I add eyes to the bass xylophones and talk about their characteristics as if they were members of our classroom community. We walk around instruments just like we would a friend, carrying and moving them the same way we would help a small child get to the bus.

When my students first learn how to remove bars from the xylophone, we play-act as if we were doctors. We get into our surgical wear, wash our hands, and start the “surgery” by removing the patients’ body parts (bars), being careful not to damage their bones (pegs). After surgery, we discuss where to store the guts (bars we do not need). When we add mallets, we talk about how our patient feels; for example, if we hit too hard, the bar jumps off and flinches just as if it were human. They are telling us, “Ouch, that hurts.” This form of self-regulation is extremely helpful in developing a relatable sense of empathy in students. Students with special needs or who are in programs such as center-based special education often struggle with social skills, regulation, and empathy. This strategy is one that can help provide constructs for social awareness, relationships, and responsible decision-making (Sander, 2021).

Conclusion

As Orff (1958) beautifully stated,

Since the beginning of time, children have not liked to study. They would much rather play, and if you have their interests at heart, you will let them learn while they play; they will find that what they have mastered is child’s play.

To the generalist teacher dropping off their students in the music room, it might be easy to misunderstand the value of silliness when they spot the many characters scattered throughout my room. Nothing could be further from the truth. These seemingly silly items hold meaning and significance to the culture and climate of the music space. They are evidence-based strategies that support student engagement and learning.

It is important to take time for playing and being silly in the classroom. The freedom and opportunity to explore leads to a stronger sense of community, student engagement, and an environment where students can work on building relationships and practice self-regulation. Most importantly, it provides a safe space for children to be themselves—fully and authentically. The silly little things in life are truly the things that sometimes make the biggest impact. ■

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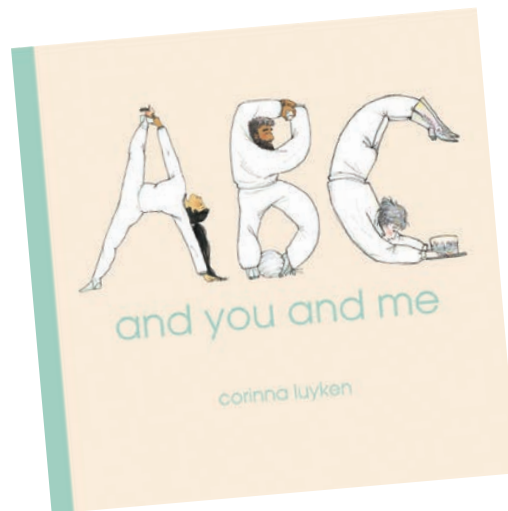
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CHILDREN'S BOOK REVIEW

Reviewed by Deanna Peters

ABC and you and me

Written and Illustrated by Corinna Luyken
Rocky Pond Books/Penguin Random House LLC, 2023



If you teach music and movement, this is the ABC book you have been waiting for. *ABC and you and me* is written by author/illustrator Corinna Luyken. She is an incredible artist whose work is multilayered, colorful, and often surprising. *ABC and you and me* is a treat for the eye and spirit. In her pencil, ink, and watercolor illustrations, Luyken depicts each letter using human body shapes. The whimsical figures include different body types, ages, cultures, and experiences. An adult is portrayed in uppercase letters and a child in lowercase letters. Luyken also slips in pictures of an item that represents each letter. For example, G has a gift, E has an egg, and Y shows a handstand with a ball of yarn and a yellow warbler. Luyken includes a key for these objects hidden in the drawings.

The author opens the book by asking a series of “can you” movement questions. Throughout the book, the letters are interspersed with invitations to dance. For example, we see the letters A through G with interwoven text that highlights isolating body parts and an illustration showing these body parts. Letters H through P are my favorite, juxtaposed with body parts that appear to be in motion. At the end of the alphabet, she finishes as she began, with a “can you” question, “What shapes can YOU be?” She concludes with three letters—this time “you” spelled out with lowercase body shapes.

Luyken’s illustrations provide many opportunities for introducing movement in an Orff Schulwerk-inspired classroom. For example:

- **Shaping:** Students make the shape of the first letter of their name with their bodies then add pathways. For example, invite students to move through the room and on the sound of the triangle, make their shape. Have them pick a second letter to make the next time they hear the triangle and figure out ways to flow between the two shapes.
- **Levels:** Students pick a letter and make the shape. Have them transfer the shape to the floor for a low level then make it in high space, moving through the levels while shaping different letters. Invite them to make a low-level dance with the letters.
- **Group dance:** Students select a word to spell. Ask, “How will you build that word with your bodies? Will it flow from one letter to another, or will each person take a different letter?”
- **Creative movement:** Students translate one of the moving/dancing pages into creative movement. Ask, “What would the picture look like in movement? What shapes do you see? Can your group recreate the tableau?” Invite each group to share their creation.

You are in good hands with this movement guide. Luyken studied dance improvisation at Middlebury College. She explains that her dance

improvisation classes taught her to be a “human being in a body” and contributed more to the art she creates than visual art classes did. Luyken’s mindful movement script is beautifully structured and thorough, including open-ended questions that invite creativity and improvisation.

As an added gift, Luyken also includes a downloadable movement guide with script on her website (www.corinnaluyken.com/extras). *ABC and you and me*, along with the movement guide, will

inspire creative, imaginative lessons resulting in engaging movement experiences for all. ■

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CHILDREN'S BOOK REVIEW

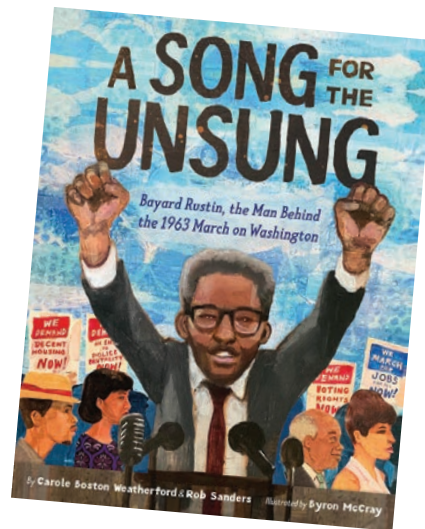
Reviewed by Ramon L. Jackson

A Song for the Unsung: Bayard Rustin, the Man Behind the 1963 March on Washington

Written by Carole Boston Weatherford and Rob Sanders

Illustrated by Byron McCray

Henry Holt and Co., 2022



A *Song for the Unsung: Bayard Rustin, the Man Behind the 1963 March on Washington* by Carole Boston Weatherford and Rob Sanders, illustrated by Byron McCray, chronicles the life of civil rights leader Bayard Rustin, including his activism in the 1940s to his pivotal role in leading the March on Washington in the 1960s. Despite facing racial and sexual marginalization as an openly-gay African American man, Rustin organized and spearheaded significant civil rights initiatives.

The book begins with Rustin's childhood. Though he experienced discrimination as a youth, he was determined to effect change. He played a pivotal role in organizing significant events such as the Montgomery Bus Boycott and the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, while also mentoring a young Martin Luther King Jr. The authors vividly depict Rustin as a skilled organizer who could unite diverse factions towards a common goal. The book also addresses the prejudice Rustin faced due to his sexuality within the context of the civil rights movement. Despite challenges, Rustin remained steadfast in his commitment to nonviolence and equality. McCray's illustrations breathe life into the historical times and events with vibrant colors and emotive characters that appeal to readers of all ages. The collage and paint illustrations include snippets of sheet music.

Using the Book in the Classroom

Compelling narrative and rich historical context make *A Song for the Unsung* applicable to various academic disciplines. It introduces students to the civil rights movement by highlighting major events, influential figures, and the struggle for equality. *A Song for the Unsung* also offers a unique opportunity to incorporate music into general classrooms or history into the music room. To highlight the significant role music played in inspiring Rustin, the authors intersperse relevant song references, such as "Sing *I'm Going to Sit at the Welcome Table* to demand service," throughout the book. These suggestions appear in large, bold italics. Students can learn about the civil rights movement by listening to the music and singing the songs, researching lyrics, composing protest songs, or even staging performances inspired by the era. *A Song for the Unsung* can serve as a catalyst for students to promote social justice, foster empathy, and engage in meaningful debates.

Themes and Messages

A Song for the Unsung explores several significant themes and conveys compelling messages to readers of all ages. Students can learn from Rustin's persistent commitment to nonviolence, his unwavering belief in the transformative potential of peaceful protests, and his dedication to effecting social change without resorting to forcefulness. Additionally, the book stresses the importance of unity and cooperation. By organizing the March on Washington, Rustin demonstrated the power of collaboration in the pursuit

of justice, underscoring the approach and significance of working together towards a common goal.

The book also emphasizes the necessity of overcoming adversity and addresses the concept of social justice intersectionality. By focusing on Rustin’s experiences as an openly gay African American man, the authors illustrate how various forms of discrimination are interconnected. This theme highlights the importance of inclusivity and the need to confront all forms of oppression.

The authors use age-appropriate language and avoid technical jargon, ensuring accessibility for a wide audience. Their effective use of dialogue brings the characters to life and creates a sense of immediacy that allows readers to feel as though they are witnessing the conversations and interactions firsthand. This technique enhances

the storytelling and helps readers connect with the characters’ emotions. The authors skillfully recreate the sights, sounds, and emotions of the civil rights movement, immersing readers in the narrative. I would highly recommend *A Song for the Unsung* for classroom bookshelves. ■

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Issue	Feature Topic	Coordinator(s)	Contributor's Deadline
Spring 2025	Perform	Christine Ballenger Austin Cooper Kelly Poquette	August 15, 2024
Summer 2025	Respond	Ian Cicco Roxanne Dixon Christa Jones	November 15, 2024
Fall 2025	Open Submissions	Diana Hawley Erika Knapp Alan Spurgeon	January 15, 2025
Winter 2026	Who: Community	Ian Cicco Austin Cooper	May 15, 2025

How We Spend Our Days

Christa Jones

Orff Schulwerk practitioners are dedicated to the artful orchestration of teaching, where music, movement, and speech become the vehicles through which we engage and inspire our students. This approach is not merely about imparting musical knowledge; it is about nurturing imagination and community and encouraging children to find their creative voices. Our commitment extends to countless hours beyond the classroom: attending workshops, poring over articles, and collaborating with colleagues to refine our skills and enrich our practices.

In her collection of essays, *The Writing Life*, author and Pulitzer Prize winner Annie Dillard reflected on the presence and perseverance required when dedicating oneself to any craft. “Who would call a day spent reading a good day? But a life spent reading—that is a good life.” She reminded readers, “How we spend our days is, of course, how we spend our lives.”

Orff Schulwerk practitioners have the opportunity to see the immediate positive impact of our work. Joy after a performance, a former student’s heartfelt thank-you, or a magical moment within the classroom all deepen our dedication. Though our tasks might not always be glamorous, Dillard’s insight encourages us to recognize how being present in these moments of human connection creates a fulfilling, meaningful life in music education.

I was reminded of this a few years ago while sharing a book with my first-grade music class. As I sang the words, one student openly expressed delight upon seeing the cardinal that appeared in the story. At the conclusion, I asked everyone to line up for their classroom teacher. Setting the book aside, I turned back to the class and there, in front of me, stood that student. “Ms. Jones, would you tie my shoe?” I was tired and wanted to respond, “Not now. Please go line up.” Instead, I looked down at his little round face then kneeled to tie his shoe. “The cardinal is my mom,” he said to me. “Whenever I see one, that’s my mom looking out for me.” I finished tying his shoe, remembering his mother had passed away a few months ago, near the end of his kindergarten year, and blinked away my tears. “Thank you for sharing that with me. I know your mom is so proud of you.” He smiled, nodded, and ran to get in line.

A day filled with routine tasks like tying a child’s shoes might seem ordinary. Our legacy is not defined, however, by performances or lessons, but by the lives we touch and the spirits we uplift while being truly present. The life of an Orff Schulwerk educator is a tapestry of moments that, when woven together, create the building blocks of our lives. It is, undeniably, a good life. ■



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